BLACK ORPHEUS

A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

1975
KRAUS REPRINT
Nendeln

Reprinted by permisson of the original publishers

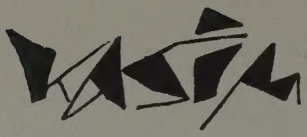
KRAUS REPRINT
A Division of
KRAUS-THOMSON ORGANIZATION LIMITED
Nendeln/Liechtenstein
1975

Printed in Germany
Lessingdruckerei Wiesbaden

CONTENTS

No. 9 June 1961

		Page
FICTION		
KASIM	Ibrahim Tahir	4
JIGIDA	Michael Okafor	22
THE FLAME TREE	Edris Saint Amand	31
THE GAMBLER	Nkem Nwankwo	49
CREATION MYTH	Marthe Arnaud	57
POETRY		
6 POEMS	Basil McFarlane	31
SONGS FOR NAETT	L. S. Senghor	25
2 POEMS	Ellis Ayitey Komey	37
INCANTATION and other poems	Mason Jordan Mason	44
EVOLUTION and other poems	J. S. Mosley	55
2 POEMS	Flavien Ranaivo	61
CRITICISM		
LANGSTON HUGHES	Ezekiel Mphahlele	16
GIMME DAT OLE BLACK MAGIC	Wolfgang Vogel	38
ART		
VINCENT AKWETI KOFI	Ulli Beier	35
TIBERIO	Gerald Moore	62
REVIEWS		
Gerhard Kubik, O. Aragbabalu, S. Akanji Gerald Moore, Ezekiel Mphahlele.		63



THE OPENING CHAPTER OF AN UNPUBLISHED NOVEL

BY IBRAHIM TAHIR

Dusk was slowly creeping on the tropical day. The sun was slowly lazily but surely sinking below the horizon — a great round ball amidst a pool of colours in the western sky — here red, there a mixture of red and purple and not quite so far away and in between a pool of yellow and delicate blue, the colour of the tropical sky. The air itself, the ground and the mudbrick huts were all tinged with this extravagant but beautiful hue. The trees, as on every occasion while the sun sets, cast long thin delicate shadows on the ground, shadows that were life-less one moment and yet so full of life the next as they responded to the gentle caressing of the tropical breeze. Amid this enchanting scene of beauty and calm came pouring forth the sharp and enchanting call of the Muezzin from the City mosque. In a very thin clear but yet so humble tone it came "Allahu Akbar" it said. Yes, Allah is the Greatest. Humbly gently but confidently it poured forth the message of Allah and from every direction the people crept home, from the fields, the market place and the village square where the girls and boys were gathered they all trooped home. Watching all this strict obedience to the religious calf of just one voice one would be tempted to think that this was indeed a stable peaceful community of a strict pure and stable order. So in fact it was, representing as it did the power of Allah and that singularity of faith so peculiar to the Muslim faith. Yet to one soul that beautiful sunlit day something was wrong — very wrong.

As he sat in the rectangular massive hall that was his Koranic school run by his father and taught by an uncle drawing as its pupils children from all over the town for no fee at all, Kasim had the feeling that that very day something was going to happen. He sat through the lesson clutching the wooden task on which the text was written, apparently absorbed in what was written on it, or so it would seem to the teacher or "mallam" who supervised the chanting gathering that half sang and half cried each his own text. But Kasim was far from absorbed in his lessons, he was indeed absorbed but in something else. For the last few months since his mother's death things had changed and in his heart of hearts. a twelve year old, he could not understand why. All he knew was that he was slowly losing favour with everyone in his father's household. Today it was some trivial matter the next day another and so on and on day after day. What bewildered him more and more was even his father. the

Imam to whom his mother and he had been favourites until her death had suddenly turned cold towards him. As he sat and thought, all the memories of the days when his mother ruled paramount and supreme in the household came back to him. She was, while she was alive the unchallenged favourite and no-one, not even his father, dared oppose her. She was the third concubine among a household of four legally married wives and three concubines. She was not therefore even a wife but according to the principles of the Faith she was to all intents and purposes a wife save in name. She and other concubines like her in both Kasim's and other noble families were descended from slaves in the earlier days to marry whom custom and even exaggerated religious opinion held as a sacrilege. But there was nothing in the Muslim faith to stop their masters from taking them as concubines or wives extraordinary. They would be sent to a noble man as a token of friendship by a friend or by the rulers to their deputies, singly or along with a ruler's daughter at marriage and both princess and former slave or "kuyanga" as they were commonly called become the possession of the master. The concubine henceforth stayed in the household and acted both as attendant and "wife". She could if she suited the whims of her master gain great favours or if she failed she could be cast away among the other women servants to do all the manual work in the home. If she was a ruler's gift she got regifted to another noble home. If she bore children they were entitled by religious law to inherit their father as though they were born of normal wives, but the concubine could inherit nothing unless their masters or husbands said so if they happened to make a will. But that very rarely happens since nearly all Muslims blessed with an octopus religion that provided for everything and anything were not bothered with the inconveniences of having to make one. That was Kasim's mother's station in the household. But did we not say that concubines could gain great favour? That precisely was what Kasim's mother did.

Her case to start with was the unique type in which she was originally descended from her husband's slaves, captured from the pagan tribes in the days of the Jihad when Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, that honoured and reverent Fulani religious leader, was doing so much to spread the gospel. Her great grandparents were captured in the Holy War. For the religion taught that in the early Islamic days all Muslims should preach their gospel peacefully to all heathen worshippers, and if they refused to believe fight them. Those captured, if they still refused to believe were to pay dues but allowed to continue their worship or as convenience may be taken as slaves. To these people Usman Dan Fodio commanded his followers to show kindness but as always all religions have human weaknesses to combat, and what happened to many of Hasan's people is everybody's guess, but is neither our business to justify or defend and nor is it our business to condemn. Some became eunuchs that graced many an emir's court and many and yet more joined the long weary march to the coast to be sold — uprooted from Home to a home. there to become a people without an identity unaccepted by their new home and too far removed by the gulf of the centuries to have anything in common with Home. But in the old days who could foresee, and on whom could you blame the crime, the buyer who did perhaps see or the seller who did not see, but definitely acted against the principles of his faith and succumbed to the temptations of greed and splendour and the lust for power. For power it was, and even as Shehu Usman Dan Fodio

lay on his deathbed the Fulani Empire was already a collection of warring Emirs fighting one another all of the same faith, and yet the faith that started the party at all had forbidden the fight of Muslim against Muslim. But nevertheless even in Adam we saw an example. Man will always be as weak and as imperfect as a mirror image, a replica of the true article but perverted. However the fact remains as far as our story is concerned that it was during such feasts in blood that Hasana's people fell captive to the scimitar and the crescent.

Her people had been brought into the Muslim community there to live and even to become generals in the Muslim armies but nevertheless slaves. Her grandfather was in fact a slave general. Her people had as was always the case, gradually become Muslims not perforce but of their own free will impressed as they were by the sublime humility of their captors' faith. They were not embittered as one might be tempted to think by hate, rather they succumbed to their lot and in most cases did all they could to become. They were despised, abused but even so they were incapable of hate. Instead they became servile, timid and gluttons for currying favour. They were like the African in contemporary society. For centuries trampled upon, enslaved, spitted upon and rejected for God knows what, yet completely opposed to a bloody way out and in some cases unaware of his own strength. That exactly was the position of the slaves of the emir's courts. They stooped to every little command and performed every act of the extreme degeneracy. As children they would grow up with the master's children, playing with them, recognising no barriers between them, although of course they dressed in the poorer cloths while their masters dressed in the richest eastern silks and brocade. But as soon as the little masters and their slaves began to mature the voices from above would begin to whisper to them what they really were and then would come the inevitable separation. But it was not unusual to find real friendship springing from the childhood association. But what about Hasana, how did she fit in the picture?

She grew up like an ordinary slave alright but for her there was no point of separation. For Hasana was a beautiful girl. She was born of slave parents of course so there was no Fulani blood in her and one could only conclude that her beauty was a mere accident. Kasim's father, her lord and master, watched her as she developed from a little skinny chocolate coloured urchin into a young and beautiful girl, and each day his admiration for her grew and eventually he ordered that she was not to be sent anywhere or to do any work, and nor was she to come outside the house either of will or of force. This of course, as custom laid down, was a sign that she was to be possessed. She was also ordered to leave her slave mother's room and sleep with one of her master's wives. One night as she lay sleeping she was awakened by the voice of her master. "Hasana, come with me" he said; and he led her out of the room and to his quarters, for, all Muslims if they could afford to have more than one wife generally have their separate quarters in the house to which the women took turns at visiting. Hasana followed her master into the room, a scene of great splendour, disturbed only by the heaps and heaps of Islamic books. Once inside her master was no longer what he was. He became the slave and she the mistress. He talked gently to her and explained she was to be a concubine and live as maid to a wife in the house. Although

by daybreak Hasana was no longer a girl and still lay half asleep and half unconscious, that meeting last night had showed her one thing, and even as her master talked, the plot had already began to hatch in her mind. What infinite power did she possess that has and could transform a man she feared into soft clay, so soft she could if she wished mould it and build herself what she may. As days wore on Hasana assumed a position of greater favour than befell any concubine. Soon she was visiting her master's quarters more nights than even the legally married wives, and poeple began to wonder. The fact was that Hasana possessed that rare something lacking in most women but found in a few. What that something was I have neither the imagination nor the audacity to suggest. Perhaps all men will find out as the Imam did that all women, blue, black or magenta have the same trade mark but that some of the "goods" differ in quality. It did not take Hasana long to find out that her master, powerful as he was, he was still a man. Through infinite feminine tricks she gradually dominated him until she became to everyone's surprise, and did I hear you say shame, the undisputed leading lady in the family, to rule and be obeyed next to no one but her master. But even so what was her master but her tool? For once the doors closed and the lights are out what man would not pay the price no matter how much? It was under these circumstances that Kasim was born the son of a favourite to be pampered and made into the Imam's beloved son. But things did not quite go as they had for a long time For life, that delicate eggshell, broke and Hasana was no more. As she lay dying the death of an ideal Muslim with the Kalimat Shahada on her lips, the Imam bent over her, tears filling his eyes, she asked one last wish. Kasim her only son, a twelve year old, she knew would now be left to suffer the lot that befalls any maternal orphan in a polygamous home. She asked of her master to protect Kasim from his half brothers and even more from his other mothers, the other women. The Imam vowed that he would do all he could for Kasim. But alas that was a promise which he could never keep. It was neither his fault nor his neglect but a result of circumstances which human as he was he did not possess the power to combat.

Soon after he had taken a favourite and she, the other women and other children made Kasim the target of attack. He was assailed from all sides until he began to feel he was no longer in his own home. Among people who had been before so kind, so gentle. and above all who had watched him grow. Today, it was some fantastic accusation of some obscure but exaggerated crime and the next day a bitter taunt which even the heart of a child like him could not help but bleed. But his heart was not all that bled. Yes, even his own body bled. For, his father, believing as he did that whatever the religion taught or was claimed to have taught was right and law; and whenever tales of Kasim's misdeeds reached him it meant a disobedience to the Holy rule. To him a defender of the faith, the respected leader of his people in the practices of their faith such transgression was intolerable. Hadn't the Koran our Holy Book said "Wabil Walidaini ihsanan?" Why then should his son of all sons break the Holy Word by the disregard he was supposed to have shown to the other women. Were they not his wives and as such the equals of Kasim's mother? The Imam's answer in this case had always been one — a tough but flexible double tongue it had — a hippopotamus hide whip that had been dried,

stiffened and brought back to life again with shea nut butter. Down it always came on Kasim's tender skin, and repeatedly too. Kasim would howl and plead for mercy, but his father would command his silence, even though the menacing whip continued to descend with lightening rapidity, a lifeless chameleon's tongue lashing out at it's prey. To shut up a child under torture is indeed impossible and Kasim's case was no exception to the rule. So long as his father beat him he would always cry; but Kasim's father blinded by fury did not realise. and the rain of blows would continue to descend until the tender mercies of the hangers on or the voices of the neighbours from next door came to the rescue. For even though the Imam could ignore a child's agonised cry his sense of honour and dignity were always effective sedatives to the outrageous burst of his temper. Very gradually these beatings became commonplace — so commonplace that all over the town the voice of Kasim was as familiar as the Muezzin's call and every evening when dusk fell people would sit expecting to hear that same voice always pleading for mercy but for some unknown reason never getting any. But so long as Kasim's father was the Imam no one would believe he was only being a victim of feminine intrigue and unnecessarily reducing his son to a whip-drunk scar-ridden child, a boy of a million twists but no Oliver. They all of course felt pity for Kasim to begin with but as the affair became more and more frequent they began to get annoyed with it all. They made the Imam and Kasim an enigmatic byword all over the town. Fathers with problem children would say to them "I will not tolerate you being to me what Kasim is to the Imam and nor shall I condescend to be another Imam". Girls and boys alike sang abusive songs secretly in his name. and far and wide the little boy's name became a legend of infancy.

Very often when these beatings became unbearable Kasim would escape from the house to his grandmother. He knew as most Hausa children knew that his grandmother was the Angel in the family ready to protect and to intervene in any family matters. There were many times when he ran away in face of another beating and one particular incident he remembered vividly. It was the day he was chased by his father right out of the house. He ran to his grandmother's and was followed right up to her house by the Imam. When she heard him coming she opened a great big pot in which usually grain was stored and Kasim was pushed in and the mouth covered with a reed tray. Kasim had remained there for about half-an-hour before his father's fury abated and he was led back to the house and his father's forgiveness procured. That of course would always happen so long as his "old angel" pleaded for him, for even the Imam respected and obeyed without question the word of his parents, for like all Muslims he believed to great dimensions the words of Muhammed who is quoted to have said "Aljannat Tahta Akdamil Ummahat". To him and Muslims all strict obedience to the parents will was an accessory after their faith and a necessary medium for gaining Allah's favour.

All would have been well for Kasim had his grandmother lived to see him through his most difficult time. But fate had its way and she died. Now that she was dead he realised that one day a break would be reached. What was more, to his physical tortures were added the more painful mental tortures. He had hitherto shared a common bowl at mealtimes with three or four of his brothers of the same age. But for some unknown reason they began to refuse to eat with him. If they had to they insisted he ate only from the part of the bowl

strictly in front of him. That was of course very difficult for Kasim, for in a case where the meal was mixed from flour to rice with the stew thrown on top of it, how was anyone to confine oneself to any one portion? Where there was plenty of stew was only a matter of chance and it would be perfectly normal to reach out and help oneself in whosoever's front it may be. But then to his brothers, instructed as one can only imagine, by their vindictive mothers, Kasim was an undesirable. He was, as they mockingly told him, the son of a slave and they even took the trouble to point out to him his maternal grand-parents practically slaves or half-servants and half-slaves. At first Kasim paid no attention to these but when he found himself alone, forsaken and even hated; whenever the taunts and insults were repeated he would retreat and cry. At night he always crept into one of the servants quarters and slept while his brothers had their mothers to send them off to bed and light fires to keep them warm. As far as the household was concerned he could as well get lost and nobody would care except perhaps, to very remote possibility, the Imam. For there were times when his father looked at him with an expression that somehow puzzled him — it was a look that was a mixture of innocence and guilt, of ignorance and helplessness and more strikingly of paternal love. In fact once he was wounded by the crack of a whip. The wound was dressed very simply and as Kasim sat one day before the midday meal a brooding hen that happened to be passing by saw the ooze of pus coming through the cloth around the wound and it was only natural that she pecked at it. Kasim felt such pain as he had never done before, but to all the household sitting around it was nothing. But when the Imam came round to him he was touched. He carefully washed the wound, redressed it again and coaxed Kasim into silence. That day Kasim remembered vividly; his mothers spent the rest of the day mumbling disapproval and jealousy amongst themselves, for much as they hated Kasim they dared not openly defy the Imam except of course when the worst came to the worst and that to a Hausa Muslim woman is to be avoided rather than looked for. Who was she anyway to defy the accepted principles of her faith strengthened as it was by tribal custom and tradition? Anyway that particular day and a few isolated occasions besides were the only times when he felt wanted or even loved. All other times it had been the same remorseless tide of false accusations, followed by the undeserved beatings.

However on that beautiful tropical day blanketed as the atmosphere was by the majestic beauty of the tropical evening sky Kasim had the feeling as he sat in the school that his infant strength could no more stand the onslaught of the bitterness surrounding him. Even as he sat there or even when one met him in the street it was impossible to fail to notice the expression on his face. It was the true picture of misery, fear, despondency, insecurity and confusion. You could see by the shadows around his eyes, funny but articulate shadows that spoke only the language of sorrow. Then there was the downcast and horror-stricken look about his eyes, kept constantly moist in a way that can be found only in the eyes of people on whom hung the shadow of doom. Perhaps what would touch you most was the pleading expression he wore. It was the kind of look that would remind one of the heart-rousing appeal "My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me". But what was it that particular day that had filled his soul with the anticipation of tragedy?

What had happened was that a stepmother had sent Kasim, before Zahar school session began, to take some money, and all but two shillings to her aunt, for the purchase of a clay pot. Like many other boys Kasim had stopped to play "etule" with some young ones like him by the roadside. Etule was a familiar Hausa game, played by building little mounds of sand and the opponent had to guess in which one the object was. Failing that the loser is made to place his outspread palm on another but bigger mound of sand for the successful opponent to hit with his clenched fist. Somehow during the game one shilling out of the two was lost in the sand. Kasim returned home crying and he knew even before arriving that no one would believe it if he told them. All the women came out and each in her own way accused him of spending or somehow misappropriating the shilling. When the Imam came home all the women were sitting in the kitchen, the gloomiest bunch one ever saw. Puzzled by this unexpected and inexplicable cold welcome, the Imam asked, "What is wrong with you all. I see you haven't even eaten today". The senior wife stood up. "My Lord what has happened today is too big and too sad for us to mention." "What is it?" said the Imam anxiously. "In your own interests my Lord and ours, for this is both as much of a scandal for you as it is for us, we should leave this untold and write it off as one of the mysteries of Allah," she replied.

The Imam's curiosity had been roused, his pride hurt and what self-control he had was instantly lost and in a very angry voice he retorted, "Will you tell me or don't I have the right even to know what happens in my household. Alright, you either tell me or you clear out. All of you"

At this the senior wife said, "We were only trying to save you the shame and embarrassment of it all. We could never understand how this could happen. It's like failing to find fire in a blacksmith's workshop and finding it in the cotton spinners loom. Perhaps this is what comes of mixing your blood with slaves."

"You mean Kasim, what has he done this time", said the Imam. "If you have to know, the shame is that your own flesh and blood is a budding thief", she said.

The Imam stood there speechless. Beads of perspiration began to roll down his face and his eyes were as red as burning coals. Meahwhile the wife continued to relate the whole story with a lot more detail that she found from nowhere. The Imam's first words were, "Lailaha Illallah . . . . Where is the little degenerate. You wait until I lay my hands on him" and with that he literally stampeded furiously out of the room, his big flat Hausa sandals echoing the sound of his angry steps. From his hiding place Kasim heard all that had been said and he waited until his father's footsteps had receded into the distance before making his way to the Koranic School. He had the fear while he was there that his father would tear in any minute and assail him. However that did not happen and all the time as he sat expectant but despondent he turned over and over again in his mind what he was to do. To run away soon after school was the first idea that came to his mind but that seemed to him an admission of his guilt, and he rejected the idea. Well what about staying away until everyone was fast asleep? Yes that seemed the only chance of avoiding another beating at least until the next mornihg. He thought perhaps his father's reason would triumph over his passion and anger before then. So when the Muezzin's call came for the

DECORATED HOUSES IN ZARIA NORTHERN NIGERIA

Magrib and everyone went home to pray and eat their evening meals Kasim hung around and waited until the late evening class. His brothers and sisters who had by then no doubt been told what he had allegedly done cast inquiring and spiteful glances at him when they came back to the evening class. When the session was over they came up to him and one of them said, "Kasim, so you are a thief. What a shame." And all the children joined in a chorus, "Oh what a shame", Kasim did not know what to say. He felt like getting hold of them one by one and beating the daylight out of their wretched bodies. But he knew even that would have been no use. He stood there watching their little mocking faces, scorn written on every one of them. Slowly the tears filled his eyes until he could see or hear nothing and he covered his face with his hands. By the time he had finished crying save a few intermittent but spasmodic sobs there was no sign of any of them and as a matter of fact he had not realised that he had stood there for nearly one hour and time was fast approaching to midnight. He thought of the little devils who had a while ago bedevilled him, certainly all asleep at home, and he made his way to his father's house.

As he came to the door he could see that in the stableyard in a hall where his father taught, was a gathering. He drew nearer. He knew at once that the gathering was about him. For he could hear his father's angry voice defying all counsel from his relatives, uncles and aunts to Kasim, who had all come to try to cool his father down. He could hear his eldest uncle say to the Imam. "Please brother in the name of our dear father, Allah have mercy on him, calm your temper and listen to what Kasim has to say for himself."

"To what?" he heard his father reply, "I am Kasim's father not his friend and I pray Allah shall not show me the day when father and son argue like equals."

"At least," his uncle said, "haven't you thought that there could have been a mistake. Don't you think that what Kasim said could have really....."

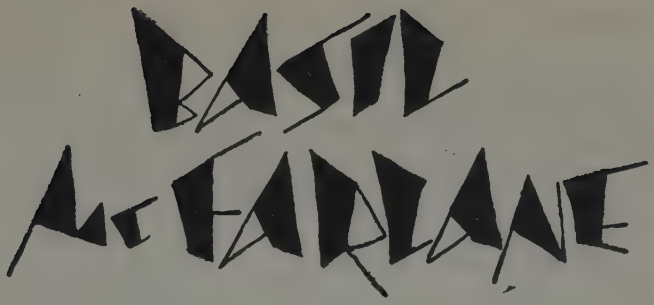
"What are you suggesting? My wives, his mother, everyone of them tell a lie! Well, lie or no lie, and even if Kasim were to get back into his mother's womb, I swear in the name of Allah I shall dig him out and beat him for this."

"Oh how dare he," thought Kasim, "Isn't my mother dead? He who should have been both father and mother to me." With that thought reverberating in his mind Kasim did not wait to hear any more. He turned and ran. He did not know where he was going, all he wanted then was to be as far away from the house as he could. On and on he ran. He passed the old tumbledown derelict walls of the town's belligerent past and with no thought even of a possible encounter with hyenas or leopards he ran on. He could not say how far he had run when he eventually got tired. But he did realise, however, that he was far from human habitation. He could see the dark shadows of the bush trees and he made for one of them and lay down. It was then and only then he began to feel the bruises he had suffered in his rush through the bush. His feet and legs he realised were all scratched. But that did not bother him. Then he began to think what his family would say when they found he was gone. What of his innocence, who would defend him?

"I had already been found guilty and sentenced anyway, so why bother?"

Then his thoughts shifted to his father. He smiled for some reason at the

thought of his father sitting on his couch all night whip by his side waiting for him to come in. Then he pictured him again disappointed and resentful and he smiled again, this time from the sheer joy of knowing that for once he had pulled one over someone. The thought that his running away might upset his father did not bother him for someone who had been so brutal and hateful would not care because he had run away With such thought in his mind sleep overtook his weary body.



POEMS

JACOB AND THE ANGEL

And shall a man
mortal though the wind
covets eternity seek only
this seek only to endure
whether failings of breath and bone
corruption of flesh and faith?
Too thin too thin the wind
of consolation here
the outer edge of prayer
the unexorcised inexorcisable knife
selfknowledge is closer to distant stars
whose stare is lonely and unexplained
solemn and keen and unwinking like regret
than the old Earth estranged now
a pillow of cold stone.

POEM

Music a kind of sleep
imposes on this weary flesh
wind beyond silence
speech of the God who ordered
trees flowering of dark earth
light, essence of darkness
birth
Lucifer massed
in arrogant disorder all about
pale quiet strength of stellar presences
hears in a wonderful dread
music a calm
persistent tread
above the wild torment of nameless waters.

ASCENSION

Carry me up some morning to the heights
Now that I have died...
Here among the stone piles have I died;
Here upon the sterile desert.
Here by the cacti crucified.
Therefore carry me up some morning to my Father,
I fulfilled,
Who is all knowledge and all strength
All wisdom and all fulness
All there is of truth
All green hills: I fulfilled
Carry me up some morning,
Carry me up some morning to the heights
Where I shall live again
Supremely;
Where I have never died.

THE FINAL MAN

This is the final man;
Who lives within the dusk,
Who is the dusk
Always.
To know birth and to know death
In one emotion,
To look before and after with one eye
To see the Whole,
To know the Truth,
To know the World and be without a world:
In this light that is no light,
This time that is no time, to be
And to be free:
This is the final man
Who lives within the dusk,
Who is the dusk
Always.

LOVESONG

You are somewhere an essence never dreamed
by me or other fortunate mariner
who holds steadfast a course among ungainly seas to find at dawn
staggering across his track your starless vessel. You
are that fate, for being inconceivable, no man anticipates
or wishes on his friend; yet having found
nurtures in it forever a strange irrational joy.
The rescue
you accept, an accident as any other in the endless chain
you celebrate; no more. The accident we are, this
only will overtake you slowly, outshadowing others. See, already
you would forsake the more complacent rhythm
of the deck but newly gained. The ocean beckons.

ELEGY: FOUR O'CLOCK

The land is full of echoes; all the bright
company of men the dumb
land uttered in prophesying tongues are gathered
in the constant afternoon. Flame licks the hills. It
is enough that I am here, one
with the maimed and dead and utterly victorious
citizens of the moment. Here
is perfection, in a calm miniature of hills, the leaden
sea, the desolate street, the tidy
burgher addressing himself to evening
and the suburbs. Day is shuttered
and done. Who is lonely
as the Wind? None sees his shadow.

Langston Hughes

By EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE

Here is a man with a boundless zest for life. Now that sounds trite. But who could say less of Langston Hughes? He has an irrepressible sense of humour, and to meet him is to come face to face with the essence of human goodness. In spite of his literary success, he has earned himself the respect of young Negro writers, who never find him unwilling to help them along. And yet he is not condescending. Unlike most Negroes who become famous or prosperous and move to high-class residential areas, he has continued to live in Harlem, which is in a sense a Negro ghetto.

Since 1926 when his first volume of verse, *The Weary Blues*, appeared, Langston Hughes has loomed progressively larger on the North American literary scene, and he has stayed top among Negro writers.

Hughes is a most versatile writer: poetry, fiction, plays, jazz lyrics, librettos, books about jazz, Negro history, and so on. We are here concerned with his verse.

There was quite a chorus of Negro voices in the twenties, and the then 23-year-old Hughes was one of the chorus. The others were Countee Cullen; James Weldon Johnson; Angelina Weld Grimké; the Jamaica-born Claude McKay; Jean Toomer; Paul Laurence Dunbar; Sterling Brown; Arna Bontemps; Georgia Douglas Johnson, and so on. Journals like *Crisis* and *Opportunity* which catered specifically for Negro culture gave a terrific spurt to creative talent.

As might be expected, a large volume of the verse that was turned out was very close to the Negro situation; the fact of oppression, the fact of the black man's rejection by the white man, the fact of rootlessness. This protest swayed between surrender and self-pity at the one end and a stiff-necked self-justification at the other. We hear Angelina Weld Grimké say in *Surrender:*

> Uncrowned,
> We go, with heads bowed to the ground,
> And old hands, gnarled and hard and browned.
> Let us forget the past unrest —
> We ask for peace.

Countee Cullen in his *Protest* says he does not long for death:

> But time to live, to love, bear pain and smile,
> Oh, we are given such a little while.

"We shall not always plant while others reap," Cullen holds forth, echoing Shelley. Although the Negro is dark-skinned he harbours a certain loveliness.

> So in the dark we hide the heart that bleeds
> And wait and tend our agonizing seed.

And yet it was he who reiterated so often that he wanted his verse to be taken as poetry, without the implications of race.

In the same idiom Langston Hughes sings:

I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.
Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed, —

I, too, am America.

Again,

The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people.

All his life the fact of Hughes's negro-ness (he has actually a light complexion) has aroused in him a desire to challenge those from the other side of the colour line that reject it:

My old man's a white old man
And my old mother's black.
My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder where I'm gonna die,
Being neither white nor black?

It is unfortunate that blunt protest, which is inevitable in circumstances of race discrimination that often expresses itself in lynchings or slow murder, seldom lifts poetry above the level of sickly, mawkish versification.

Naturally, this colour-consciousness had, at a certain point, to look for its roots, or rather try to feel Africa as the Negro's cultural cradle. In 1923 Hughes met and heard Marcus Garvey exhort Negroes to go back to Africa to escape the wrath of the white man and Hughes became one of the many poets who thought they felt the beating of the jungle tom-toms in the Negro's pulse. Their verse took on a nostalgic mood, and some even imagined that they were infusing the rhythm of African dancing and music into their verse. They were called, rather half-sarcastically and half-enviously, the "Rhythm Boys", Prof. Stirling Brown of Howard University, who was a young poet then, regarded the movement as a mere faddism. Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois roared at Carl Van Vechten, a white author, for portraying in his novel, *Nigger Heaven*, Harlem cabaret life as a show of savage, primitive passions in the rhythm of its dance and music.

This romantic mood very rarely produces powerful poetry. Only when it was dispersed and was fused with other thoughts could it result in a sober poem like Hughes's *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*. He wrote it on his way to

Mexico to see his father who hated "niggers", although he was a Negro himself. This worried the son no end, and the poem is a fusion of thoughts about the father, Negroes, himself, slavery and African ancestry.

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.
I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

He came to Africa. As with most things, Langston Hughes took this continent casually, with a sense of fun. Not as Richard Wright was to take it years later when he came here and gave an account of his experiences in *Black Power* (1954). Wright took himself too seriously and expected Africans to warm to his approach immediately simply because he is black. He assessed the value of African cultures as he observed them in Ghana by Western standards and summed them up as inadequate (in spite of his own admission that he could not strike a medium for mutual understanding between him and the Ghanaians). He did not have Hughes's humility and sense of adventure.

"My Africa, Motherland of the Negro peoples! And me a Negro! Africa! The real thing, to be touched and seen.....!" Hughes exclaimed. To him the people were "dark and beautiful". But he was sad, because "the Africans looked at me and would not believe I was a negro. You see, unfortunately, I am not black!"

The vogue for primitivism put Langston Hughes in an embarrassing position at one time, which, however, he came out of with grace. He had found himself a patron in the person of a rich white woman. She kept him comfortably in food and clothing so that he could write "beautiful things", things that came out of his "primitive soul". One day he wrote something angry against the luxurious newly-opened Waldorf Astoria, the symbol of plenty surrounded by so much poverty and toil. Hughes simply did not know how to satisfy his benefactor. He writes:

> She wanted me to be primitive, and know and feel the intuitions of the primitive. But, unfortunately, I did not feel the rhythms of the primitive surging through me, and so I could not live and write as though I did. I was only an American Negro — who had loved the surface of Africa and the rhythms of Africa — but I was not Africa. I was Chicago and Kansas City and Broadway and Harlem. And I was not what she wanted me to be.

This experience hurled Hughes into another emotional crisis. The first one had been that time when he was in Mexico and felt he hated his father. Desperately ill, he went to his mother and stepfather in Cleveland.

Langston Hughes left the African theme for a long time. Now that Africa has begun to take on a new significance for the American Negro, he has reviewed the old poems with their drumbeats and nostalgia. He has written new ones, and handled the lot as part of *The Poetry of Jazz*, a series of readings Hughes does, accompanied by drums. The following is in the new mood:

Africa,
Sleepy giant,
You've been resting awhile.
Now I see the thunder
And the lightning
In your smile.
Now I see
The storm clouds
In your waking eyes:
The thunder,
The wonder
And the new
Surprise
Your every step reveals
The new stride
In your thighs.

The Negro's recall of the slave days piles up imagery in such poems as *Trumpet Player;* and the "black" theme is elevated from the shallows of self-justification. There is a muted voice of protest here, coming out like the plaintive tones distilled from a muted trumpet: Here are four stanzas from the poem.

The Negro
With the trumpet at his lips
Has dark moons of weariness
Beneath his eyes
Where the smouldering memory
Of slave ships
Blazed to the crack of whips
About his thighs.
The music
From the trumpet at his lips
Is honey
Mixed with liquid fire.
The rhythm
From the trumpet at his lips
Is ecstasy
Distilled from old desire —
The Negro
With his trumpet at his lips
Whose jacket
Has a *fine* one-button roll,
Does not know
Upon what riff the music slips
Its hypodermic needle
To his soul —
But softly
As the tune comes from his throat
Trouble
Mellows to a golden note.

It is not often that Langston Hughes's anger mounts to a pitch. When it does, especially when he writes on the South, his protest comes straight from the shoulder, and he throws in tense and turgid word-pictures. In *Third Degree* he says:

Slug me! Beat me!
Scream jumps out
Like blow-torch.
Three kicks between the legs
That kill the kids
I'd make tomorrow.

Bars and floor skyrocket
And burst like Roman candles.

Again, there is the poem, *The South:*

The lazy, laughing South
With blood on its mouth.
The sunny-faced South,
Beast-strong,
Idiot-brained.
The child-minded South
Scratching in the dead fire's ashes
For a Negro's bones.
Cotton and the moon,
Warmth, earth, warmth,
The sky, the sun, the stars,
The magnolia-scented South.
Beautiful, like a woman,
Seductive as a dark-eyed whore,
Passionate, cruel,
Honey-lipped, syphilitic —
That is the South.
And I, who am black, would love her
But she spits in my face.
And I, who am black,
Would give her many rare gifts
But she turns her back upon me.
So now I seek the North —
The cold-faced North,
For she, they say,
Is a kinder mistress,
And in her house my children
May escape the spell of the South.

He writes much in lightheartdd vein, skimming the surface of things, presenting the externals of a situation to suggest the inner meaning to the reader, never posing as a thinker. His abundant sense of satire reinforces everything he touches in this manner. At one time he will say:

I don't mind dying —
But I'd hate to die all alone!
I want a dozen pretty women
To holler, cry and moan.

A man returns to his lover whom he left a long while ago. The woman says:

I looked at my daddy —
Lawd! and I wanted to cry.
He looked so thin —
Lawd! that I wanted to cry.
But the devil told me:
Damn a lover
Come home to die!

In a roaringly funny satirical poem, *Life is Fine*, a man is driven by some love problem to thoughts of suicide. He goes to a river and jumps in.

I came up once and hollered!
I came up twice and cried!
If that water hadn't a-been so cold
I might've sunk and died.
But it was
Cold in that water!
It was cold!

He takes a lift sixteen floors up a building to jump down from. He yells and cries because if the building hadn't been so high, he might have jumped and died. "But it was high up there! It was high!" So he decides to go on living. He might have died for love, "but for livin' I was born". And,

Life is fine!
Fine as wine!
Life is fine!

Finally, in more pensive vein but with Hughes's deep chuckle down there at the base of his questionings:

What happens to a dream deferred
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore —
And then run?
Does it sink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over —
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load
Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes still talks about the beauty of being dark-skinned. He may yet help to supply the artist's answer to the dilemma in which the American Negro finds himself these days: political, economic and social integration with whites — yes; but can the Negro retain his cultural identity and avoid being swallowed up by the American mainstream. Some Negroes of culture think they want to do both. There is a good deal of talk among them about *négritude* and the enchantment it holds out to them. One Negro writer said recently at a conference of writers that, with the general improvement of the coloured man's position in the United States, it was going to be hard for those apprenticed in protest writing of the "lynching tradition" — especially the older men — to re-adjust themselves. Langston Hughes is in no such predicament. It is a long time since his poetry outlived dead-pan protest. And Hughes was never pre-occupied with a two-dimensional protest.

OR THE STRING OF BEADS

BY MICHAEL OKAFOR

A few moments before there had been speeches. He and I had been sitting at one end of one of the long tables. There had been laughter and drinks; eatables and smiles had flowed continuously. You could just make out the familiar smell of moth balls in the inseparable smells of all sorts and blands of perfumes. Moth balls of course, betrayed the fact that the clothes had been extracted from the preserving boxes.

My greatest friend at the Training College, Helen, was my chief bridesmaid and she had been telling me continually how beautiful I looked in my wedding gown. I liked her for that.

Now I was alone and with the white lace still rustling over me, I was tearing away at the brown paper that wrapped the square-shaped object. My father had sent it as a wedding present. He had at first objected to our marriage but somehow he had come to change his mind. And to follow up his complete approval he had sent me this heavy present, But, he had warned, I should not open it until after the wedding. You may then understand why I was so impatient.

I did not need to have a second look: it was a tape-recorder. I should not, of course, have known what it was if I had not spent one of my holidays in Lagos miles away from here with one of my relatives. Nneka, I am sure, would not recognize one; she has hardly left our home-town. And even though she is my elder sister I have seen more places than she.

As I was saying, I confess I was disappointed. For although I did not know exactly what to expect. I did not in the slightest consider this possibility. Any way, it was a father's gift and I brightened immediately and warmed myself into feeling happy about it.

I touched a knob, which was remarkable for being unusually dainty. I was merely attempting to examine the instrument. To my great surprise a voice began to issue out from it. It was my father's voice, not the usual clear one. but something quite hoarse — and came out deliberately.

"Enuma", it had started, and I was surprised to hear my name. I was reassured immediately that the voice was my father's. He had never liked to call me by my Christian name, which I prefer. He used to say he gave up everything Christian when against the advice of the Catechist and others, he had taken a

second wife. His own Christian name he gave up at that time and though he never said it, he expected you to change your name too. No, not me: I like being called Esther; it makes you feel at once that I had been to school and, was what we used to call at the Training College, modern.

"Enuma", the voice called again. Then it sighed; and there was a long pause.

"I have always wanted to tell you this. But you were too young; and too much after your own affairs when you were big enough. I knew I must tell you this someday.... someday. Perhaps you know it already; perhaps indeed you own one yourself already..... perhaps.

"Have you, Enuma, ever walked from here to Adazi? No, you haven't: I know that. Surely, not when there are lorries to take you around these days. These new things are good alright.... but.... but they make one lazy."

The deliberation with which the words were uttered held you spell bound and made you want to continue to listen. "How could anyone walk to Adazi?" I asked myself. "Not for anything; at least, I can not think of walking ten miles. For that is the distance from my town."

The voice roused me again:

"Enuma, are you listening? I was just saying that walking to Adazi was a simple matter to us in those days. And we were at that time only a little below your present age. Enuma, you will be twenty in a month or so. But when I was that age we were just about finishing our Primary school education. I do not know if you can be called luckier, but you see we went to school when our parents considered we were old enough to stand the teachers' cane — say from ten or eleven years of age. Then we had to march to Church on Sunday at Adazi, rain or not. The only priest in this neighbourhood was in that town. And we all had to go to church there.

"That night there was bright moonlight only that occasionally thick black clouds were seen about — at times even hiding the moon so that you thought it was going to rain. There was a gentle Harmattan breeze, which was not quite as dry as it had been all morning. We all set out in a large unorganized group of about fifteen — children who lived in our neighbourhood. Even had there been no moonlight we would still have gone, for it was Christmas Eve.

"But the party which had been going from compound to compound collecting its members had not gone very far from ours when my father called on me. I returned to fetch him his pipe. He was quite old at this time and did not move about much. I did not keep long with him. But when I returned my companions were not in view. So I set to run. I could clearly make out what appeared to be their voices; but I never reached them. I continued to run. Yes, they were in front. At last I was exhausted and could not run any longer. So I began to walk. When I had recovered my breath sufficiently I shouted at them. The echo merely rang on, but there was no reply. The voices appeared to be nearby but when I ran forward I met no one. It was as if they kept a constant distance and hid themselves just when they saw me running for them. Believe me, I was getting really frightened for there were no houses around only trees and grass; dark trees with long shadows and tall grass.

"I had by this time done about half the journey and there was no going back.

"Something squeaked not far away and I jumped and ran forward. Nothing; it

was only a squirrel perhaps. I continued. But I thought I heard footsteps behind me. I increased my pace afraid of looking back. But the footsteps came nearer and nearer. I could bear the suspense no longer: I looked back and I saw a multitude of people advancing on the path and through the grass. I set out with a dash crying and shouting to my father to help me. How could he help? The old man could hardly move and in any case was not near. There are no houses between the two towns, as I've said. I made my way on the path, up and down small hills, across tiny streams now dried up, over fallen trees.

"I thought I was dreaming; a dream could not have been worse. I ran along till I fell partly through exhaustion and partly because I struck my foot against a stump. I struggled in vain to stand. I just lay down and waited for the worst to happen to me. I am surprised that I did not remember to pray as we had been taught to do when in danger.

"Something cold dropped on me as I lay down. I knew it must be a snake so I beat it off with the last bit of energy left in me. I did not succeed in driving it off. In fact it stuck itself round my wrist. I rubbed it against the ground, against the grass, on my shirt. It remained fast. Then I summoned courage to look at it, it was only a string of beads, the type women were fond of in those days. I wiped my forehead to remove the sweat and dust. In a moment I was again hearing the voices of the party. I called out and this time they answered. I joined them, telling them nothing of my experiences as they would hardly believe me.

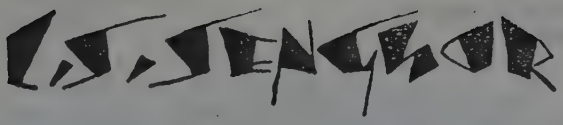
"I now know that the string of beads, the "jigida" as it used to be known had been my helper. I have got out of awkward situations since then by rubbing the beads on my forehead." There was a pause, after which my father's voice dwindled.

I do not exactly know when the voice stopped telling its story. But a choir was singing right in front of me. I looked at my hand and over the white glove of my wedding dress was a green "jigida". I clutched it as if to make sure it did not vanish. For the whole thing appeared to me to be a dream. I reassured myself that I was awake by calling myself "Esther" and answering.

I rubbed it against my forehead and continued to answer to my own name. Then I gradually opened my eyes and there was John by my bed. He said he'd been calling me and waking me up for nearly three minutes.

I looked at my wrist, there were no beads — only my wrist watch. Somewhere from nearby a wireless set was issuing out a Christmas Carol. I sighed and got out of bed.

A few days later when I was actually wedded to John, I told myself my children must wear strings of beads at least when they are babies. John will of course never know why. He'd laugh at me and say I am old fashioned. But what else can I do when my father's voice continues to ring in my ears: "Take care of it, Enuma, you will need it". And my father had been dead long since — long, long, before I had this dream. The old saying can't be wrong: Dead men, when they do speak, always mean business.



TEN POEMS FROM LEOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR'S "CHANTS POUR NAETT"
Translated by Sangodare Akanji

O THESE STREETS....

(for flutes and *balafong)*

O these streets of sleeplessness, these streets of the meridians, these long nightly streets!
For so long, I have been civilized, and yet I have not appeased the white god of sleep.
I speak his language well, but my accent is barbaric.
The darkness here is black, the scorpions on the path are sand-coloured, night coloured
And clouds of stupor weigh down my chest that is shaken by thicket and wheezing.
But here now is my sister the breeze, that visited me in *Joal,*
When foreign birds sang the ancestor's message, sweet like evening dew.
The memory of your face is stretched on my throat, a lordly tent,
A vaulting of velvet that encircles the blue forest of your hair.
Your smile runs through my sky like a milky way
And the golden bees on your shady cheeks are humming like stars
And the Southern Cross is glistening on your chin.
And then I ejaculate a cry of carnal desire that floods my heart like the Niger spreading over winter crops.
And I cry out aloud like the water to the creatures of the sister trees:
"Nanyo!"
And I cry out to the couples who chatter on the honest mat of the beach:
Nanyo!
And I shall rest a long time in blue black peace,
I shall sleep a long time in the peace of *Joal,*
Until the angel of dawn returns me to your light,
To your brutal and cruel reality, civilization!

SHE DRIVES ME INCESSANTLY
(for two *balafong*)

She drives me incessantly through the thicket of time.
My black blood pursues me through the crowd up to the clearing where the white night sleeps.
Sometimes I return to the street and I see the palm tree again smiling in the monsoon.
Her voice brushes me lightly like lisping wings and I say:
"It is Naëtt!" I have seen the sunset in the blue violet eyes of a blond negress.
In Sèvres-Babylone or Balanger her Ambra- and *Gongo*-scent have spoken to me.
Yesterday in the Angelus church her candle eyes burnt rosebeetle-coloured
On her banana skin. My God, my God, but why should I tear out my shrieking, pagan senses?
I cannot sing your anthem nor dance it without swing,
Sometimes a cloud, a butterfly or a few drops of rain are on the window of my boredom.
She drives me incessantly through the space of time.
My black blood pursues me into the solitary heart of night.

IN WHAT TEMPESTUOUS NIGHT

What dark tempestuous night has been hiding your face?
And what claps of thunder frighten you from the bed
When the fragile walls of my breast tremble?
I shudder with cold, trapped in the dew of the clearing.
O, I am lost in the treacherous paths of the forest
Are these creeper or these snakes that entangle my feet?
I slip into the mudhole of fear and my cry is suffocated in watery rattle.
But when shall I hear your voice again, happy luminous morn?
When shall I recognise myself again in the laughing mirror of eyes, that are large like windows?
And what sacrifice will pacify the white mask of the goddess?
Perhaps the blood of chicken or goats, or the worthless blood in my veins?
Or the prelude of my song, the ablution of my pride?
Give me propitious words.

I ACCOMPANIED YOU
(for *Khalam)*

I accompanied you to the warehouses and to the gates of night
I was speechless before the golden riddle of your smile.
A brief dusk fell on your face, a divine mood.
From the height of the hill, the refuge of light, I saw your loincloth extinguished,
And your headtie, like the sun, sank into the shadows of the ricefields,
Then I was pounced on by fear, ancestral fears more treacherous than the leopard,
And my spirit failed to drive them beyond the horizon of day.
Will this be eternal night and the parting without a return?
I shall weep in the darkness of the motherly caves of the earth,
I shall sleep in the silence of my tears,
Until my brow touches the milky morn of your lips.

SONG OF THE INITIATE:
(for three drums: *gorong, talmbat,* and *mblakakh.)*

Behold from the purity of night rise the steep altar, the granite brow.
The blue green line of the eyebrows, fresh like the shadow of the *Kori.*
To the pilgrim whose eyes are washed clean, with fasting and ashes of waking
The head of the red lion appears, at sunrise on the highest peak,
In superreal majesty. O killer terror, I withdraw, powerless.
I have no antelope horns, only a hunting horn filled with emptiness:
My untouched beggar's bag. O tear me with your twin lightening,
How terribly sweet their roaring! Delightful, unrelenting the claws!
And let me die, to be reborn in the revelation of beauty!
Silence, silence over the shadow.....subdued tom-tom,.....
Tom-tom, long . . . . . heavy tom-tom . . . . . tom-tom black. ....

I HAVE SPUN YOU A SONG
(for two flutes)

I have spun you a song, sweet like the cooing of doves at noon,
And my three stringed *Khalam* gave me thin accompaniment.
I have woven you a song, but you would not listen.
I brought you wild flowers, containing a scent of secrets, like the eyes of a sorcerer,
And their blooming is rich, like twilight at *Sangomar.*
I brought you my wild flowers. Will you allow them to whither
While you play your ephemeral games?

A HAND OF LIGHT
(for flutes)

A hand of light caressed my eyelids of night
And your smile was above the mists that drifted monotonously over my Congo
My heart was an echo to the pure song of the birds of dawn
Thus my heart once beat the pure song of power in the branches of my arms.
Look, the bushflower there, and the star in my hair and the ribbon encircling the brow of the athletic shepherd,
I shall borrow the flute whose rhythm pacifies the herds
And all day long sitting in the shadow of your eyelashes at the Fimia-source
I shall faithfully graze the blond roaring of your herds.
Because this morning a hand of light caressed my eyelids of night
And all day long my heart was an echo to the pure song of the birds.

BE NOT AMAZED

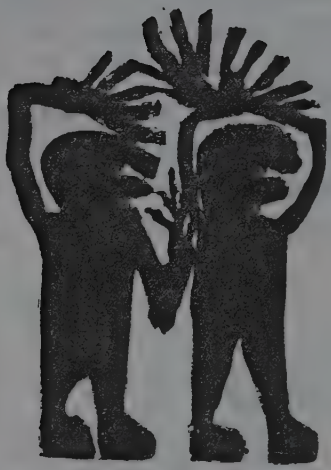
Be not amazed beloved, if sometimes my song grows dark.
If I exchange the lyrical reed for the *Khalam* or the *tama*
And the green scent of the ricefields, for the swiftly galloping war drums.
I hear the threats of ancient deities, the furious canonade of the god.
O, tomorrow perhaps, the purple voice of your bard will be silent for ever.
That is why my rhythm becomes so fast, that the fingers bleed on the *khalam.*
Perhaps, beloved, I shall fall tomorrow, on a restless earth
Lamenting your sinking eyes, and the dark tom-tom of the mortars below.
And you will weep in the twilight for the glowing voice that sang your black beauty.

I WILL PRONOUNCE YOUR NAME
(for *tama*)

I will pronounce your name, Naëtt, I will declaim you, Naëtt!
Naëtt, your name is mild like cinnamon, it is the fragrance in which the lemon grove sleeps,
Naëtt, your name is the sugared clarity of blooming coffee trees
And it resembles the Savannah, that blossoms forth under the masculine ardour of the midday sun.
Name of dew, fresher than shadows of tamarind,
Fresher even than the short dusk, when the heat of the day is silenced.
Naëtt, that is the dry tornado.. the hard clap of lightening
Naëtt, coin of gold, shining coal, you my night, my sun!
I am your hero, and now I have become your sorcerer, in order to pronounce your names.
Princess of *Elissa*, banished from Futa on the fateful day.

YOU HELD THE BLACK FACE
(for *Khalam*)

You held the black face of the warrior between your hands
Which seemed with fateful twilight luminous.
From the hill I watched the sunset in the bays of your eyes.
When shall I see my land again, the pure horizon of your face?
When shall I sit at the table of your dark breasts?
The nest of sweet decisions lies in the shade.
I shall see different skies and different eyes,
And shall drink from the sources of other lips, fresher than lemons,
I shall sleep under the roofs of other hair, protected from storms.
But every year, when the rum of spring kindles the veins afresh,
I shall mourn anew my home, and the rain of your eyes over the thirsty Savannah.



Notes on the words printed in italics:

Balafong	a kind of xylophone built with different sized calabashes
Elissa	original home of the Serer, Senghor's people who now live on the banks of the Senegal river
Gongo	sweet perfume used by women in Senegal
Gorong	deep sounding drum
Joal	birthplace of Senghor
Khalam	a three stringed guitar, similar to that used by the Hausa people
Kori	the thin green line that indicates the existence of a river bed in the desert
Mbalakh	a large, high pitched drum
Nanyo	exclamation of joy (from the Wolof language)
Sangomar	the mouth of the Salum river
Talmbat	a heavy drum
Tama	a small drum used to accompany praise songs

THE FLAME TREE

A CHAPTER FROM THE NOVEL "BON DIEU RIT"

BY EDRIS SAINT-AMAND

One Sunday afternoon before the sermon, Pastor Henri had condescended to call on Uncle Prévilus, the best behaved of his children, as he called him. But with all the goodwill in the world the old people could not offer him any food, for they had nothing to bite themselves. When Pastor Henri was about to leave after exchanging a few words, he suddenly had the idea that Prévilus should cut down the large flame tree that stood in his back yard.

"This flame tree, Prévilus, was it not a tree to which you used to bring sacrifices, in the old days when you were still caught in superstition? I think you ought to cut it down! What is this tree still supposed to do here?"

Prévilus was speechless. His tongue stuck in his throat. Besides his rheumatism plagued him and his mind was heavy with worries anyhow. There was a long pause. The pastor waited.

"Oh, I would have felled it long ago," the old man said at last. "After all, I am freed of superstition. But the tree gives me shade. Without the flame tree it would be intolerable in this yard here in the afternoons."

But the pastor remained hard: "So a little bit of shade is worth more to you than the presence of Christ?" he said. "So I have mistaken you! Only in name you are a protestant. Christ will never enter this yard, until the cursed tree that has once served as an altar for the devil will be uprooted. Not until it will be destroyed, as if it were the devil in person."

Uncle Prévilus pulled his face into a grimace that could mean both yes and no.

Plaisimond said: "O father, it must be true what the pastor says. As long as the tree is here, we are pursued by misfortune. Who knows? Maybe the tree is responsible for all the misfortune that has befallen us. I am working, yet I cannot see that I profit from my work. Money dissolves in one's hands. For days on end we have nothing to eat. There was a time, when there was no Pastor Henri around here.." and he laughed when he said that, "and if we had suffered as much in those days, I would simply have taken what was not mine. Yet I remember well, what he told us. For the last week Monsieur Cyrille has not given me any work. For a whole week I have been without work — and yet I do not steal. Because Christ has forbidden it... We must cut down the flame tree, if we do not want the misery to remain with us."

Grandmother Lésida gesticulated and clapped her hands in order to indicate how much she agreed with Plaisimond. And when he was silent, she declared with sweet irony; "Listen, Prévilus, I am older than you, and for me you are still a child. I command you to tear out this accursed flame tree tomorrow morning! I do not want to see it again here in this yard. It is responsible for all our misfortunes. Does not Pastor Henri tell us every day "One cannot serve Christ and Mammon at the same time?' I must confess to you, Reverend Pastor, that Prévilus does seem to be same these days. Since his rheumatism has caught him again, he has lost his head. Do you know, Reverend Pastor, what he said yesterday? We should not reproach his son Prévilien any longer. Everybody had his own ideas, and if Prévilien insists on serving the Loas we should leave him in peace."

"I am sure that Prévilus was only joking," said Pastor Henri with an evasive gesture.

"No, no, he said it in earnest," she continued. "I am old enough to know when a person is joking and when he is serious. Believe me, Reverend Pastor."

But Prévilus interrupted her. "Dont listen to Grandmother Lésida, Reverend Pastor," he said "O, I am in such pain today. My arm has never hurt me so much."

"Pains, of course, you only dont want to fell the flame tree," cried the grandmother.

Pastor Henri seemed seriously worried. "The arm gives you great, great pain," he said in a low solicitous voice, "Next Sunday I shall bring you a remedy. But remember that you are suffering for the sake of Christ, and that you have to bear everything, absolutely everything with happiness. Above all you must fell the flame tree. Because this cursed tree can call down the wrath of God on you and your family."

Prévilus stood there for a long time thinking. His head was heavy like an overripe fruit. "I will think about it, Reverend Pastor," he said, "But if I fell it, where shall I be able to sit when the sun shines? Tell me that, Reverend Pastor, tell me that."

But now Pastor Henri was really annoyed. In a threatening voice he shouted at the old man: "I am beginning to think, Prévilus, that grandmother Lésida is right, and that you are afraid to tear out this sacrificial tree! It is not my fault if I have to speak harshly to you. You force me to do it. May be your illness has confused your head? This is unheard of! You say that you need shade! So you admit that you sit in the shade of a curse laden tree!"

The old woman broke out into shrill laughter and slapped her thighs, as if she wanted to smash her kidneys. "I told you so, Reverend Pastor," she said. "I told you so. His disease has turned him into a coward."

Then uncle Prévilus did not have the strength to resist this alliance. He shook his head: "Alright, you have demanded it, and I must agree. Tomorrow morning this tree will no longer be in my yard. You know everything, Reverend Pastor, and what ever is your wish, must be my wish too. Not even the roots I will leave in the ground. You shall be satisfied with me. Reverend Pastor."

The pastor left happily and very pleased. It was almost night, a warm moonlit night. And while the pastor walked slowly to the little hut in which he was going to proclaim the word of God he became conscious of a great happiness. This little scene which he had just experienced was quite enough to let him relish with all his senses, with his tongue, his fingers and his eyes, the infinite pleasures that awaited him one day in heaven to recompense him for his earthly sufferings, Thus he walked along blissfully. When he arrived at Dorismond's hut, his little chapel, the believers had already assembled. And once again this evening the pastor declared before the pious ones, that uncle Prévilus was the best of his sheep, the model of a convert, a true Christian.

"There may be," so the pastor declared," people who are neatly dressed, who are clean and can read and write, but all that is nothing if they are not children of God. Blessed be the poor in spirit....."

Prévilus, whose rheumatism had not prevented him from attending the service, was glad about these words. In the dim light of the assembly his eyes shone like cats eyes, and an almost blissful smile played around his mouth.

Then the pious assembly left the little room. The ceremony was over.

The night had descended, a night sparkling with stars. A night with distant drums; a soft wind played in the branches, the heavy shadows brought worries to the heart, the toads sang their repulsive song and a soft calm sank into the weary limbs. Uncle Prévilus stretched out on his bed and tried to sleep. But his arm pained him. A great big black moth suddenly rustled on the partition, and caused great fear, because it was said that it brought bad luck. After a long fight, Plaisimond could hit the insect that was flying from wall to wall with a broom, and brush it out into the night through the half opened door.

At last uncle Prévilus fell asleep. Suddenly he had a dream. A very beautiful woman with very long hair stood erect in front of him and said: "Uncle Prévilus, Uncle Prévilus! It is me, mother Erzulie, listen to me. I have hurried here to tell you, that great misfortune will befall you, if you are going to fell the flame tree. You already wonder what your offence might be. You search and search in vain. Yes, it is me, who pursues you, I have made you poor and miserable and sick, because you have forsaken me. If you are going to fell the flame tree as well — woe to you! I shall not say any more."

He awoke and could not sleep again. The rheumatism would not leave him alone and his bad thought neither. The night seemed to become longer, horribly long. At last the morning squeezed in through the cracks in the wall. But the bad images remained in his head clinging unperturbed. Yet he had promised to cut down the flame tree this very morning.

Ma Prévilus and Grandmother Lésida were the first to get up. It was cold. But they knew that they had to fulfil a duty.

Ma Prévilus called Plaisimond: "Plaisimond! Plaisimond! Remember that we promised Pastor Henri to fell the flame tree. Unfortunately you have no time, because you must go to ask for work at Monsieur Cyrille's. But get up at once and call on Jean-Bart, Philémon and Osiris on your way. Tell them that Grandmother Lésida and I need their help to cut down the flame tree,

All three are good protestants. For such work they will not want much money. They will even enjoy doing it. When Monsieur Cyrille pays your wages on Sunday you may give them a little bit out of it. But get up now, Plaisimond, get up!"

But how surprised they were when Uncle Prévilus interrupted her: "No! No! Nobody shall touch the flame tree!" he declared. "I will not have it. The flame tree provides shade in the yard. If you have it cut down, where shall I go and sit then? Where shall I rest?"

"Did you not promise Pastor Henri to fell the flame tree?" cried grandmother Lésida.

But then the old man really let fly: "That is none of Pastor Henri's business. I am ill, and I cannot miss the shade which the tree provides. Besides Pastor Henri cant give orders here. I am the master of this house! I dont have to obey anybody. I'm not the servant of Pastor Henri. I have white men am I still supposed to be a servant? Listen to what I tell you, Plaisimond. If you go and tell people to fell the tree you are my son no longer. Then you are a disobedient, contrary young lout, and then I shall drive you out of the house."

As he spoke thus the old man had risen with ease from his bed, all pain had suddenly disappeared from his arm. In utter confusion Plaisimond dropped all his eagerness, just as one drops one's trousers before going to bed.

"Alright father, alright. If you dont want it, I shant do it. You are the one to command."

"I have commanded," the old man mumbled.

Ma Prévilus and Grandmother Lésida could only withdraw into a corner and chatter incessantly. Prévilus was a hypocrite, they said, a superstitious fellow who was afraid of the Loas, that was the reason why he behaved like that. But they were going to tell Pastor Henri!

But the old man silently ignored the words that condemned him.

translated by Sangodare Akinjé

VINCENT AKWETI KOFI

A SCULPTOR FROM GHANA.

BY ULLI BEIER

Ghana has no great tradition in wood carving, as have the Ivory coast to the West of it and Nigeria to the East. Yet it is from Ghana that we get one of the most gifted modern West African carvers. Vincent Akweti Kofi was born at Odumase-Krobo (Southern Ghana) in 1923. He was educated at Achimota and qualified at the Royal College of Art in London (A.R.C.A.) in 1955.

He is now an art teacher, but continues to do his creative work mainly in wood, cement fondu and metal. He has exhibited twice in London, several times in Ghana and recently in New York.

The five works reproduced here are all over life-size wood-carvings which can be seen at Akuafo Hall, at University College, Ghana. They are impressive, massive works, that seem lonely and out of place in the odd domestic architecture of Akuafo Hall. They all radiate a certain rugged, untamed power, that is expressed in the bulging, heavy forms, the rough surface, and the compact composition.

The most delicate figure is the relatively small "Mother and Child". It is executed in very light coloured Odanta wood, and the artist has given it a rather fine, smooth, surface treatment. The feeling of the work is tender and gentle. The large, clumsy hands of the mother press the child to her body. Mother and child look past each other in different directions, thus introducing an element of loneliness into this intimate theme. All the lines are soft and rounded and sensual. The heart shaped head of the mother has a flat receding forehead and large serious, meditative eyes. (Plates I, II right, III).

Much more rugged and forceful are the shapes of "The Drummer" (Plate II left, Plate V). He is shown in what seems to be an attitude of invocation. The face turned upwards, the large bulging eyes looking at the sky, the soft heavy lips loose and expectant. A feeling of power and force is conveyed largely through the vigorous bend of the left arm, and the large, heavy fists. But the stance of the legs is gentle, almost humble, and the resulting contrast produces the impression of potential, but subdued power.

The "Hornblower" has the same chipped surface treatment and similar bulging forms. (Plate IV, Plate VIII) The composition is extremely solid and compact. Slightly disturbing to me is the fact that the features are suddenly naturaliistic; the puffed cheeks and half closed eyes showing the effort of blowing. This naturalism of the face seems to conflict with the transposed forms of the rest of the sculpture. On the whole, the anatomical features of the human form are only the raw material of Akweti Kofi's composition. In this sculpture he was, to my mind, less consequent.

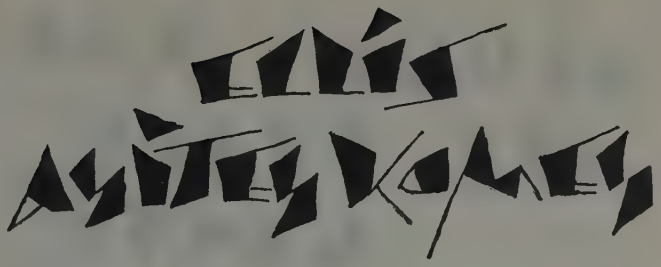
A rather bewildering piece is "The Crucifix". Not so much in itself, as through its title. The figure is extremely heavy and powerful. The forms are round and bulky and the feeling of force is accentuated by the resemblance of the hands and feet to elephants' feet — almost like some legendary figure from folklore. The giantesque figure is not without merit, but it is difficult to associate it with its theme. (Plate VII).

Of almost classic poise and beauty is the figure of "The Dancer." The tall, pregnant looking woman, has raised one arm above her head. The left hand rests heavily on her hip. It is a hand typical for Kofi's work: large and bulky, giving a strong down-to-earth feeling to all his work. Although the figure is entitled "The Dancer" it is static, like the rest of Kofi's work at Akuafo Hall. The figure stands erect and solid, like a caryatid.

It is a great pity that the powerful, monumental work of this Ghanaian sculptor is not yet known in Nigeria. Here, our sculptors seem to be burdened by the heavy weight of a great tradition. Some of our artists repeat feebler and watered down versions of their forefathers work. Others, in their desperate desire to free themselves, get lost in their attempt to adopt and digest European forms. Only a few have attained the originality and power of Vincent Akweti Kofi.

THE PLATES

Plate I	Mother and child — Odanta wood, five feet. (detail)
Plate II	The drummer. "Okyereman". Mansonia wood Eight feet. 1958 Right:
Plate III	Mother and child. (detail)
Plate IV	The hornblower. "Asokwa". Mansonia wood. 1958
Plate V	The drummer. Two views.
Plate VI	The dancer. Two views. Mansonia wood. 1958
Plate VII	The Crucifix. 1957-58.
Plate VIII	The Hornblower.



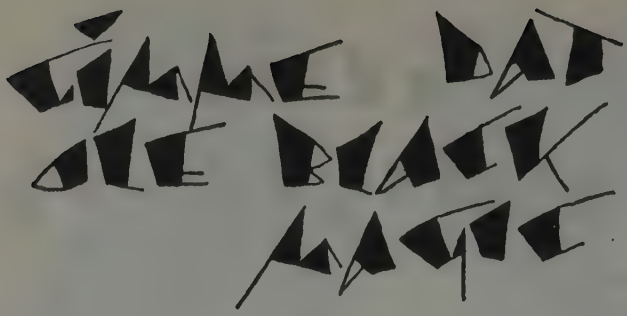
POEMS

THE CHANGE

Your infancy now a wall of memory
In Harmattan the locusts filled the sky
Destroying the sweat put into the field
And restless seas shattered canoes
The fisher-folk put to sail by noon.
The impatience in your teens
Yet silent were your dreams
With the fires in your heart
Breaking the mask of innocence.
The evasive solitude in your womb
And the determination of your limbs
With eyes like the soaring eagle
Shattering the glass of ignorance.
Your infancy now a wall of memory
Before this you, like the worms,
Leaning on for vain indecorous dreams
And the cobras with venomous tongues
Licking the tepid blooms of hibiscus.

MIDZAKUMAN
(My native land)

O soil! Land of the patient seas
Where the sun rises and sets across the winds
And the moon smiles over staggering mysteries
And riches of earth cram at your heels
And the spoils of victors rest by your feet
And I, your son, sing a song of emptiness,
When I'm gone, your son, cry no more.
Empty life and empty souls
Empty hearts and empty minds
The coward that I am, your son,
Never to lose a drop of my blood
Nor exude a sweat from the flesh
Nor shed a tear on your corpse
When I'm gone, your son, bury my seeds.



NOTES ON THREE NEW JAZZ BOOKS

BY WOLFGANG VOGEL

Jazz began towards the end of the last century with the appearance of the band of Buddy Bolden, the legendary barber from New Orleans. It was the beginning of a musical form that was the synthesis between African and Occidental musical cultures.

Buddy Bolden's jazz sounded dissonant and strange to people brought up on conventional European musical concepts, and the regular beat tended to get on peoples' nerves, to such an extent that critics labelled it "barbaric" -- they hardly knew then, that the adjective applied better to the critics than to the music.

But jazz soon broke out of the intellectual ghetto the critics had assigned to it and like many a cultural manifestation that was rejected at its appearance, it later experienced a splendid rehabilitation. The time of humiliation was followed by a flood of enthusiasm and with it came a mass of jazz literature. Many books were written about this musical phenomenon, books that often said more about the enthusiasm of the author than about the music itself. There were famous works like Rudi Besh's *Shining Trumpets* and Hughes Panassié's *Le Jazz Hot*. They were magnificent in their own way, superbly written with great love for their subject, but they went basically wrong when they defined jazz as a purely American manifestation. One admitted that jazz contained a number of African musical elements, but one was never aware how large was the African contribution and what the extent of its influence in rhythm, harmony and musical concepts

Reading this jazz literature one notices a general uncertainty when it comes to defining jazz. This uncertainty results from the fact that too little was known about African music and jazz was fitted too far into European-Occidental categories.

The purpose of this article, however, is not to analyse the faults of those books but rather to spotlight the three works that give us a new insight into jazz. Marshall Stearns, who is professor at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Hunter College, New York, is one of the few great jazz experts in the world

today. His *Story of Jazz* is a very musical, very American book. A whole century of American culture history is examined in it. The analysis of the music is a pretext for him to make sociological investigations of the fate of the American negro, to criticise American society and to investigate the role played by jazz in this society. Stearns' book is cultural history rather than pure musical history. His jazz analysis is based on the concept "blending". The entire development of jazz from the drum orchestras of Africa to the neoafricanisms of Art Blackey is to him a gigantic blending process. Africa and Europe are the opposite poles of this process and African and European music have achieved a synthesis in jazz.

Starting with an analysis of West African music (unfortunately he is relatively superficial here) he arrives at a description of New Orleans, the city that is regarded as the birth place of jazz. (Of course jazz originated in many places at once in the USA, but in New Orleans it became popular and obtained world fame.) The description of the wild, colourful life that filled the city at the delta of the Mississippi in those days leads him on to the discussion of blues, spirituals, worksongs, minstrel music and ragtime. Stearns defines these popular musical forms as the "American background to jazz." But here he makes a big mistake: the overestimation of America's contribution.

African culture has undergone changes in America, has adapted itself to the new surroundings, the new rhythm, the new living conditions. From the European culture of the Occidental immigrants grew the new Euro-american culture; and the African culture of the black people who had been carried to America developed into a new Afro-American culture. Blues, worksongs, spirituals and ragtime are not the "American background", because this background does not exist, in fact cannot exist except as a geographical concept. All the folkloristic prejazz forms are the result of a mixture between African and European musical cultures. Stearns himself arrives at this conclusion.

From a description of the Jazz Age in the twenties, Stearns leads on to "swing", "bebop" and "cool" which he describes in great detail.

For Stearns music is the living expression of an epoch, and therefore he concludes his jazzbook with an investigation into cultural and social problems of the jazz period. What part did jazz play in American society, in literature and the plastic arts? What part does the Afro-American play in the United States? What is jazz today, what is its future? These are some of the questions that Stearns tries to answer towards the end of his book. His *Story of Jazz* is a brilliant work, one for which the "fans" have been waiting for a long time.

Equally brilliant, and perhaps more scientific is Alfons M. Dauer's *Der jazz — Seine Ursprunge und seine Entwickelung* (Jazz, its origins and development).

Dauer is a musicologist. In his book jazz is not placed into a social or general cultural context. The author has written a book that is distinguished by objectivity, precise scientific definitions and theories and the introduction of a precise terminology.

Dauer first of all gives us an exact definition of African music, which he is trying to explain with many examples. (His book contains an appendix of seventy musical scores taken from African and jazz music.) Then he introduces jazz, and shows that it is the result of a contact between African and Occidental music. According to Dauer all the early forms, archaic and classical

jazz, Dixieland and Chicago style are the result of the influence of Occidental music on African music. All forms of traditional jazz then are "black" music with "white" influence and only with the appearance of swing, the opposite process begins to take place.

What then is African music and what are its characteristics that have been preserved in jazz? The basis of African music is rhythm, a rhythm that is produced by percussion instruments like drums and xylophones. This rhythm, says Dauer, is completely free, that means it is not tied to a simultaneous tone movement or melody. African music follows its own laws, which are brought down to two main principles by Dauer.

First of all African music uses several *basic metres* simultaneously. (We have a basic metre when an exact number of equally accented beats is repeated in fixed periods of time. Thus in a triple metre we have three beats to a time unit.) This means, in the simplest case, that a 3/4 measure is beaten against a 4/4 measure. Dauer calls this type of rhythm *polymetric*.

The second principle of African music is that *several* rhythms can be beaten on *one* basic metre. The basic metre is being rhythmically dissolved and this is done through a shifting of accents and the use of syncopation. Dauer calls this process "polyrhythmic". African musicians produce a very artful music through an application of these two principles, which becomes more or less complex according to the number of participants.

Harmony has a less important place in African music. If harmony is defined as the sound of several notes within a short space of time, one can find two basic principles for African harmony. The one basic principle is called *parallelism* by Dauer. In this case singers, flutes and strings begin the melody simultaneously. They all have the same rhythm, and keep closely together. On the other hand we have *polyphony* when the voices are completely free: the voices or instruments start their melodies independently from each other, they play different rhythms and exist freely side by side. Their relationship to one another is very loose, and at certain points apparently ceases to exist.

By comparison Occidental music is poor in rhythms. It uses a single metre, that forms at the same time the rhythm of the piece. Occidental rhythm only serves to support the melody, it is hidden in it. The rhythmical movement is completely tied up with the melodic movement, they are inseparable, Any plurality of voices is based on a system of euphony, that is produced by the tonality of the dominant, a schema of harmonic sequences.

The folkloristic precursor of jazz, according to Dauer, is the worksong, that is still being sung on the cottonfields of the Southern States today. In the worksong we rediscover the ancient African working songs, whose form was taken over almost entirely. There are however the beginnings of harmonizing, which is due to European influence. The spiritual, another precursor of jazz, is the religious song of American negroes. It originated from the Africanisation of ancient English church songs, which were rhythmified and sung according to the principal of parallelism, and was rearranged according to the ancient African scheme of call and response. The priest or principal singer took over the part of the call while the congregation sang the response.

Even in these early folkloristic forms Dauer sees the beginning of the

synthesis, which begins through the equal importance given to melody and rhythm. Moreover the melodies begin to run in European harmonic sequences.

In one of the major chapters Dauer comes to the phenomenon of the blues, which is of extremely great importance for the development of jazz. Blues has its origin in folklore, but soon developed into a sophicated art form that can be regarded as a new Afro-american creation. Dauer adds some new aspects to the numerous blues theories.

Blues usually has 12 time form, but it is easiest to understand if one divides it into three phases of 4 measures each. The first phase is in the tonic, for example C major and moves towards the end to the dominant, c 7, in order to continue in the second phase in the subdominant, f-major. In the third phase, via the dominant, g major one returns to the tonic c-major. This sequence of tonic, subdominant, dominant and tonic is purely of European origin. The connection of the three keys can easily be shown on European instruments like the harmonica or the accordian. Dauer calls the sequence of the harmony of the basic steps the *blues formula*.

He then proceeds to show that the blues formula plays a secondary part and that it is subordinate to the formation of melody. This is an entirely new theory. Dauer proves that the sequence of the harmony of the basic steps is not yet present in the earliest blues. The formation of a blues melody arises from a development of the call and response scheme. The call and response scheme was a way in which several simultaneous melodies were re-arranged as a sequence. In the blues the first two phases belong to the call, the third to the response. The fact that the third phase contains the response proves the Afro-american singer has unconsciously grasped a law of occidental harmony — because the dominant always has the character of a response. Dauer calls the division of the blues into call and response the sequence of the blues pattern.

A further characteristic of blues are notes that do not fit into the occidental categories of major and minor. They cannot be represented with notes and arise from the flattening of the third or seventh note on a key. This characteristic is generally known as blue notes.

Dauer then goes on to describe the individual styles of Jazz. What is commonly known as New Orleans Jazz he divides into *archaic* and classical jazz. Archaic jazz originated through a negro imitation of white marching bands. Such marching bands were composed as follows: the rhythm section consisted of a large and a small drum and a tuba, the melody instruments were clarinets, trumpets and French horns. In these marching bands the melody instruments play several improvised variations on the same theme simultaneously and on top of the polyrhythms of the rhythm section. In the archaic jazz style there are no blues notes. The musicians play "pure". Nor do we find the call and response scheme, for the blues is not fully developed during this time.

The classical jazz style is developed in New Orleans towards the end of the 19th century. It is developed out of the marching jazz and the now fully developed blues. The classic jazz bands play mostly for social dances of the Afro-americans, which represent according to Dauer a kind of shifting of ritual dances, into a profane atmosphere. The new purpose of the music brings with it a new composition of the band. The rhythm section consists of a

percussion in which the large and the small drums of the marching band have been combined, plus a piano and a banjo and a string bass; the melody instruments are usually cornet (or trumpet) clarinet and trombone. The polyphony has undergone an important change. For the trumpet has now taken over the call and the clarinet and trombone the response. But this is arranged in such a loose way, the response begins even during the call: the clarinet and the trombone start to play their response when the trumpet has only just started its call. The resulting polyphony Dauer says consists of the relationship between the individual musicians, which gives definite functions to individual instruments and to which they have to stick. In the classical jazz style the blue notes are also present, and we have the further characteristic of "shouting". The trumpet player exclaims with his instrument and produces a sound that has an emphatic impact, similar to the "fieldhollers" of the worksongs. Another new tone is the "growl", a vehement vibrato that is produced by holding the hand in front of the trumpet or trombone. In the rhythm section the percussion beats the basic metre, while the other rhythm instruments and the melody instruments invent new rhythms according to the laws of African polyrhythm which intertwine, separate, play against each other and thus create considerable tension. In the earliest classical jazz all the rhythm instruments are used to beat the basic metre, while only the melody instruments create counter rhythms Dauer proves that the rhythms of the classical jazz-bands are very related to the African drumming orchestras.

The last chapter speaks about the styles of Dixieland and Chicago jazz which resulted from an imitation by white musicians of classical jazz. This imitation of the classical jazz style led to a watering down of its idiom. The African polyrhythm is lost, the melody instruments play around each other and are no longer divided into the call and response scheme, which had given a first place to the cornet and a second place to the clarinet and trombone. The blue notes are largely replaced by pure notes and the rhythmic variety of the classical jazz style is replaced by relatively poor rhythm. The musicians have taken over the vibrato and the shouting merely for the sake of effects.

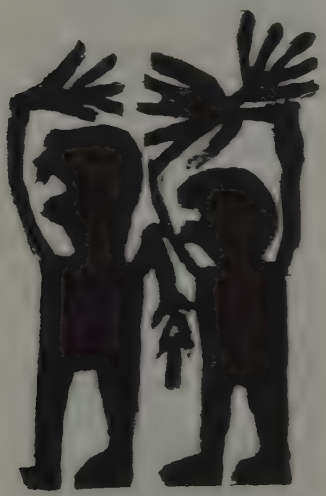
The Chicago style is a further watering down, if compared with the authentic jazz, but it also forms a new starting point, because it leads on to the swing era. These to variations of jazz Dauer calls Euro-African, with the emphasis here on *Euro*. A development that achieves fulfilment in swing.

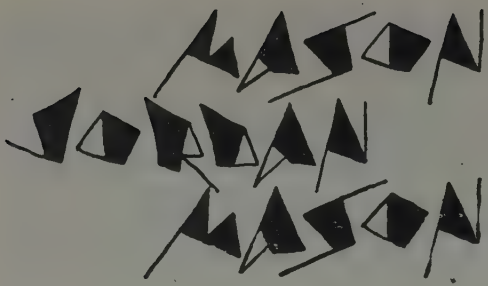
The authors of "hear me talking to ya" saw their task differently. They wanted to create a history of jazz with the help of utterances by the musicians themselves about their music and their time. The work is beautifully complementary to the above named books. The authors Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff went with a tape recorder into the bars, the night clubs and meeting points of musicians and led endless conversations with them. They skimmed the international jazz magazines for the authentic testimony of jazz musicians and thus they created a fascinating chronicle of jazz. It is difficult to describe or criticise such a successful book. When we open the book the great jazz musicians begin to speak: Bunk Johnson, King Oliver, Alphone Picou, Johnny Dodds talk about their music, and how and why it was made. The theatres, ball houses, the speak easies and the barrell houses seem to be crowded once more, and everything is re-enacted in front of our eyes. Freddy Keppard places the cornet

to his mouth and begins with "High Society". Bessie Smith bleeds to death in the streets of Chicago and Roy "Little Jazz" Eldridge weeps because of the humiliations he has to endure because of his black skin. The kings of swing and bepop appear and Stravinsky, Milhaud, Ravel and Dvorak give their appreciations of jazz music. From Buddy Bolden to Dave Brubeck, from Benny Goodman to Dizzie Gillespie they tell their story. "Hear Me Talking to Ya" is like a conjuring of the reader. This book is jazz, it is music transformed into letters. This is perhaps the greatest compliment one can pay to a jazz book.

With Stearns, Dauer, and Shapiro and Hentoff we have three standard books on jazz that can give full satisfaction to every jazz fan and music lover.

Bibliography :
Marshall W. Stearns: *The Story of Jazz*. Oxford University Press Inc. New York 1956.
Alfons M. Dauer: *Der Jazz — Seine Ursprunge und seine Entwickelung*. Erich Roth Verlag, Kassel 1958.
Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff: *Hear Me Talking to Ya*. Reinhard. New York 1955





EIGHT POEMS

OF A GLACIAL BLUE LIGHT

The reeling wounded remembrance
lapping like tired waves
lapping up the old salt tide
succeeding
now and again succeeding
in casting up
where the beach is littered
with ancient derelicts
succeeds now and again
in casting up
that which was never expected
that which
we had hoped
was at the bottom of the sea
Call it a glacial blue light
this reeling remembrance
this remembrance
that casts up
now and again
that which was never expected
casts it up
from the very bottom
of the tired dead sea
the black old sea
which now and again grows sick
sick of her old dead depths

MOTILE

If water cateracts and slithers
like free quicksilver
in this season
when myth is dead
shall we call the years to count
for the myth is dead
Let the season flow to silver
and splinter on
its own blunt edge
the cataract is hedged as time
that breaks like dread
in our facile mind
On the end of edge
could the years be held to count
the season flow
for years the myth is dead
as our facile mind

INCANTATION

Ecstasy swells
from the bells of your breast
swelling on swell
the flood-tide of bliss
surging under
under the blanket of mist
dimming your eye
The pulse is ringing angelus
the sun at high noon
incarnation
our flesh
elation holding the blood mute
as if cupped in hands
beseeching
the quiet lips reaching
beyond sky or land

THIS AGE AND DAY

Cadillac like a mile long
and twice as slick
Breezed lightning
blue as the winter
White side wall tires
humming like humming birds
all so slick
But no shoes
or shoes with holes
nose blue as winter
Humpty-dumpty
had
an uncle and an aunt

Named Sam both of them

And not so slick

CANAAN

The landscape
was
the intermingled
bodies
of nude sleeping females
the concaves
deep in shadow
breasts, buttocks, shoulders
thighs
peak bright in sun
the hills
of Canaan
were something like this
the white bodies
faceless, armless
under the setting sun

MARKET DAY

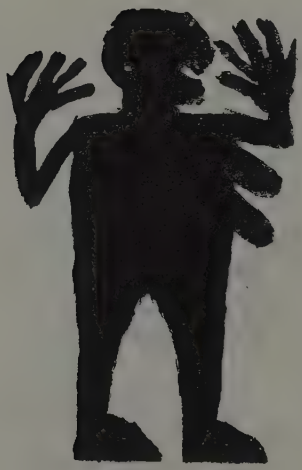
Anything could be bought
which is to say it
was for sale
everything at a price
including the market
and the basket of eggs
including nest eggs
The sky was an fluffy
as the basket
the eggs were packed in
and as high
The river was pretty low
and there were other things
too
Anything could be bought
Anything

JIMCRACKY

I keep writing about the winter
else because its so cold
It's white like a woman
who just looks at the ceiling
Only I don't see one yet
who just lie there eating an apple
It may be just superstition
but all the dark ones are warmest
It is just like all the sun
soaked right in their veins
I don't want no more winter
its all white and cold like

KINETIC

Mouse-bird
ka-ka-ka calling
with wicked teeth
The delicate leather wing
Nostrils flaring
like a stallions
broken but unsubdued
Age ka-ka-ka calling
through the thin maze
The blood spelling blood
Ka-ka-ka calling
from the wicked eye
Spelling out the letters
which once were said
to be handwriting on the wall



THE GAMBLER

BY NKEM NWANKWO

A small group of tired men, most of them carrying football Pools Coupons squatted or stood by the steps of a Lagos Post Office. The Postal workers had all gone home for the mid-day break. It was yet some minutes before they were to resume but the waiting group smarting from the sun were restless.

"They no go come," said an old man getting up from the stone he had made a seat. "They no go come."

"No mine am," said a lanky young man. "I sabe these Post Office people. They don suffer me three years but they no go suffer me again. My frend don teach me how I go play pools. Yes — No be small small money like that de win No I go save big money and throw' am in my time." He glanced a challenge at the smilingly sceptic group. His clothes were shabby, his shoes down at heels but his eyes were deadly optimistic.

"Yes," shouted the orator: "My frend Bayo we de work with me last month no de work with me again. He throw in one hundred pounds, yes one hundred and he win thousands. Now I see am ride fine fine cars and carry fine fine women. You no see am". This last was directed at a shortish, self-effacing clerk standing by. "You no see 'am". The young orator had a way of converting anybody into an acquaintance with a glance.

"Perhaps," the man addressed said very cautiously, and glanced at the five shillings note he meant to invest that week.

"Yes," said the orator "I no go wait for this dam people. I go go for nother place". He smiled a companionable smile all round and straggled off.

As soon as he was gone the Post Office opened. The sturdy clerk of the five shillings note dashed to the counter, and getting there first bought his Postal Order, registered his pools coupons and emerged feeling as he had felt for the past ten years that the world would be kind to him at last.

"One hundred pounds" he said to himself remembering the fiery orator's words "Impossible". He smiled a smile of diffidence mixed with optimism. Some passers-by noted the smile and thinking it was for them returned it but Okoli Ede nicknamed "Time up" by his friends of the Government department where he worked, did not notice. His thoughts were engaged in contemplating the vagaries of that new mysterious god football pools. He came to the bus stop and looked a little wistfully at a standing vehicle. He would have liked to go by it, his home was a mile away and the sun eagerly pricked his head but

his salary did not allow for casual expenses. He walked therefore and after sweating at the neck for sometime came to his home, a small sooty room in the back yard of a rakish angled building. The room had a tone of minimum convenience not of comfort. It was furnished with an iron bed, a table and a chair. A corner of it segregated with an old blanket served for kitchen.

Okoli Ede took off his workaday clothes; blue khaki shorts and white shirt, and changed into brown wrapper and singlet. Then he set about boiling water for his garri.

"No, impossible" he murmured to himself. He could not stop the train of thoughts set on by the orator. Mightn't there be something in it though? To gamble on a grand scale? But with one hundred pounds! Fifty perhaps —

The pot was aboil. Okoli Ede prepared his lunch, ate, washed up and then came to his table to work on his G.C.E. papers. That was the pervasive aspect of his life. He was always eager to get home to it and his nickname 'Time up' commemorated the haste with which he got away from the office at close of day.

But this time Okoli Ede could not concentrate. There was a restlessness inside him; bred of a mental conflict which was growing and spreading. Wasn't life ordinarily tedious. For five years he had been taking the G.C.E., and failing. Will he ever reach where he had all along aimed. A voyage to England. A law degree. Back to Nigeria. A prosperous car, long and American. women . . . . Politics. More women. Ministerial office. More money than one could have need of..... or would it not be better to gamble with everything. If one won . . . . In one jump the end achieved £75,000. Okoli Ede got up, excited by the overwhelming figure. He had always loved money. There was a time he lost a shilling, he went without his meal for the whole day to pay for that loss.

A reaction against optimism set in and Okoli Ede with a hiss of disapproval sat down hard and resumed his work . . . But after some minutes the figure 75,000 persistently danced across his line of vision. He unlocked a drawer set in the table and slipped out a bank account book. He opened it. His assets stood at exactly £100. A coincidence? But it might be an omen. In newspaper, his stars for that week sad said: 'Do not be afraid to take a chance'; why should his credit stand at exactly the figure the young orator mentioned?

But one might fail even with a hundred pounds. Suppose he failed. He had responsibilities, his father and mother struggling against a perverse land which yearly failed to yield them enough to eat. Memories of that land had haunted him like an evil spectre forcing him to accumulate, to place a barrier between himself and want. Suppose he failed. He threw the accounts book inside the drawer and recommended work. He must never again think of the mad scheme.

But he did think of it. Deep inside where the mind of men acted without awareness the conflict went on.

"I will not fail." Okoli Ede woke up the next morning with those words on his lips. "I will not fail." His nerves tingled, his body was all warm, his hands clammy with sweat, his throat constricted with excitement. With £100 it is impossible to fail. He jumped up and sought activity, anything

that would prevent him from thinking, for to think is to hesitate and tremble. When Okoli Ede went to work that morning he carried with him his bank book; but he still had not the strength to tell himself what he wanted to do with it. Work was slack that day and when the Chief Clerk, bored with inactivity, left to chat with a pretty girl in the next section, Okoli Ede slipped out. The excitement was still on him. He walked hurriedly, he could not look himself in the face. The bank clerks divined his purpose and treated him with the insouciance reserved for those who withdrew rather than deposited.

That afternoon when he reached home he could not summon up life to boil water for his garri. He lay on his bed face down, exhausted with the strain, his mind torpid, unable to contemplate the terrible deed that would pitch him up or send him right down. Some force, some energy accumulated over the years had smoked off leaving only hope.

His mind was clearing now seeking points of contract with solid elements, boyhood memories. He remembered on a certain occasion being tempted to give his school fees to a money doubler. His father's friend had dragged him away by the ears. But this very day he had done it.

He slipped out of his pocket a wad of notes. — Thirty pounds. The remains of five years honey pot. Some instinct had prevented him from throwing in everything, he had remembered that he had to live until the fortune came .... He thought of the awed faces of the crowd at the Post Office when he had asked for a money order for seventy pounds..... And so he had fed the god twice in two days.

The morning sun flooded Okoli Ede's room revealing its dingy starkness, but fresh invigorating air came with it and gave out promises of a fuller more adventurous living. Okoli Ede was suddenly filled with a discontent and a shame for his stingy colourless way of living. When the money came — There was no doubt now that it would come — how would it look in that room. But no matter. It was wonderful what fresh paint, colourful curtains and a new carpet could do for a room... A little bouncy, Okoli Ede went out to work. Afterwards he walked into a silver plush store and equipped himself for the role he was to play in a few days time Back home he sang and danced as he cleaned out his room. "Not bad" he said at last stepping back and examining his handwork; the almanacs covered the putrid parts of the wall and the curtains looked fetching... With a pleasurable feeling of achievement which he had never known in all his thirty years he opened a leather box lying on the bright new carpet. Reverently he examined the contents: a made-to-measure two piece suit, an up-to-date tie, black shoes, shirt — Why not put them on now. Would that be a little pushing. Okoli Ede smiled with a little of his old diffidence. At last he was arrayed and trying to see himself in a small mirror, many things still lacked but some can wait... He went to work the next day smartened, suited and stiff.

"Eh, 'Time up' don rise high," several clerks gathered, eager for banter.

"Na so!"

"Wetin be her name?"

"Why 'eeno tell us make we prepare?"

"I never know say ee has one."

"Whosai plenty-you no sabee them quiet ones.... Women die for'am".

"Na waya O!"

The Chief Clerk looked up sharply and the clerks hustled to their places. That always inflated his dignity a little. He was a tall, thin man with museum-piece spectacles and the yellowing eyes of the drunkard. He peered suspiciously at Okoli Ede and remarked his suit. Then he looked furtively down at his own cigarette-ash-speckled bargain shirt and frowned. He would set down any clerk who got above himself. The office was not the place for show.

A thirst for experience, for pleasurable irresponsibility for secret sensation possessed Okoli Ede. His caution, rooted by upbringing had not quite died, once or twice it had murmured from the deep recesses but Okoli Ede had pushed it down, after all one had to live, and with the coming fortune he was only living on his expectation. He entered a pub and for the first time in his life stared at the hired women, drank beer and listened to vigorous music — he would have liked to follow up and mingle with the whirling mass on the dance floor in riotous abandon but timidity restrained him. He gulped more beer, his eyes glassed and his head swam. He rose to go. On his way a girl made eyes at him and his suit; but when he crawled near her she turned from him cold and proper. "Time will come. She will run after me" Okoli Ede consoled himself.

His change from steady modesty to recklessness gave neighbours matter for talk. But Okoli Ede did not heed raised brows or pointed whispers. He plunged violently into looseness borne on the crest of desire and hope.

The results of the football matches appeared on Sunday. Okoli Ede did not remember to buy the papers for he was suffering from the body's reaction to immoderate pleasure; the bowels moved funnily at painful intervals, the mouth was coated with spider webs, the eyes smarted, the legs were heavy.

The dividends were declared a few days later — £50,000 for top points. The excitement was too much for Okoli Ede. He had to walk the street to cool off. He wasn't afraid but his heart beat very loud.

While waiting, his craving for pleasure increased but there was no money to gratify it. Then one night he hired a girl. He woke very late in the morning and started dressing hastily. The girl woke too and when he wanted to pay her he was a shilling short. She made a point of it.

"Come tomorrow," said Okoli Ede roughly. "I no go come no time. You go pay me now." She was a hungry-looking waspish creature used to fights over pennies. Okoli Ede was afraid of her and of what the neighbours might say.

"If you no pay me you no go go work," she grasped him... "Or I go take this" she left him and dived for his new coat.

"No No! Not that. Please make e take that," he gave her a tin of face powder.... she considered, then threw the coat and powder contemptuously at him and stamped out, she would have preferred a fight — Okoli Ede was very late. The Chief Clerk, a little triumphant, watched him come in. He had had a difficult morning himself. A quarrel with his wife had left him as empty as a deflated football. The clerks had sensed his need to recover his prestige on somebody and were keeping out of his way.

"Na jus now 'ee de come," asked the Chief Clerk darting a baleful glance at the dishevelled Okoli Ede.

"Yes," said the latter sullenly, going to his seat.

"You no hear me!" roared the chief clerk; his rage suddenly touched off. "If you no take time we go sack you ... yes sack you one time ... You come work when you like eh. Abi you think say you be director ... you think say na you alone sabe wear suit?".

This sally was too much for the other clerks. They roared and slapped their thighs and shouted "Oga ejo — O!".

The plea only swelled the Chief Clerk and stimulated his tongue. "Look 'am!" he said. The clerks directed their several gazes at Okoli Ede who was standing scowling by his table.

"He no fit fill 'im belle and 'ee de wear suit ... No be your name be director or — "

He did not go further. The clerks stifled their mirth and a hiss of amazement escaped them as they saw their chief's face a bewildered world of black, blue and spouts of blood.

Okoli Ede glared murderously for a moment, and assured that the bottle had made its mark, walked out of the office.

"Let them sack me," he shouted as he got home. "They don't know who I am ... but they will."

He slumped on his wooden chair and put his head in his hands. He sat in that position all day. Evening had set in when he rose, still unsteady with passion. Just at that moment, a blue envelope crept through the aperture below the door.

"Who be that?" Okoli Ede shouted nervously

"Na me."

"Who be you?".

No answer. Okoli Ede picked up the letter. Foreign Postmark. The letter dropped twice from his shaking hands but he hastily picked it up each time ... He couldn't open it, for once opened the secret will no longer be a secret. Clutching the letter he lay on his bed and closed his eyes. Then he suddenly jumped up and in one swift movement tore it open and stared at it hard; his mind curiously enfeebled could not grasp the full meaning, but his body divining by reflex knew, and the heart thumped dumbly.

Ten shillings. Okoli Ede murmured at last with a dull voice ... Won ... Ten shillings. The thought circled on the wave of consciousness. Impossible — Impossible, I spent a hundred — He would go and find out. The pools people had representatives somewhere ... No impossible. Ten shillings. It isn't true. But when he reached the streets his purpose started reflecting its futility. His legs had representatives somewhere ..No. impossible Ten shillings. It isn't true. But he went on .....

Something must be done ... One can find a place where money was kept carelessly and steal ... He couldn't find another job and his parents and neighbours would have a poor opinion of him if he went home to farm ... If only there were no policemen around.

There was a deafening screech near Okoli Ede and suddenly a demoniac taxi careered wildly and halted near the pavement. The driver lept out and came and towerd angrily above him.

"Why 'ee no look wey 'ee de go?...you wan die?...if you wan die why 'ee no fall into Lagoon there."

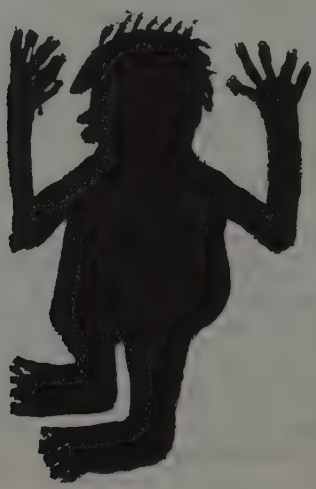
Okoli Ede didn't answer but walked on with the same mechanical gait.

"Oloriburuku, man of evil omen!" shouted the taxi-driver. "I no go kil. you."

He walked back to his car and dashed away. Okoli Ede stood by the lagoon and watched the expanse of water calm and opalescent with the evening colouration. Far out to sea many brightly coloured boats squatted like sated sea-monsters of old. Then a canoe with two pullers came by trailing close to the shore. The fishermen seemed pleased about something. They pulled with vigour lapping the invigorating evening breeze gratefully..... Then they broke into a song anxious to drown their nagging fear of not being able to provide enough garri for their large families.

"They are happy" thought Okoli Ede watching them until they had formed black specks that verged with the blue misty haze in the distance. Far in the west the sun had broken into little ridges that flamed like blood on fire. A little later the night with its usual formidable suddenness blotted out the day.

Okoli Ede looked around to make sure that no one was near, then spread his hands wide and went with the day.



THREE POEMS

BY J. S. MOSLEY

EVOLUTION

The bush God

A Totem

The Jesus God

A Cross

The Jungle Jesus

A Holy Pole

Who became Boss

When Fetish became Cross?

One lauded doctrine
Has it

That the blood evolves even

As it is

From Time's horrific erection
Flushing

Darwin's elite selection

Who still reading, bleeding, and
Blushing

Forget to ask for fear of speaking
Out of turn

What the hell has happened

To the godamned sperm?

ZYGOTE

I shall move into the deep water
While the cool sands caress my feet
The sun carves my body
And the white churning foam
Laces my knees amid the scream
Of quiet whistling winds
And the flow
The steady slow
Legato
Wire brush beat of the breaking waves
Why? Say why?
Am I here at the foot of the sea?
Before the altar of my God.
But I shall move into the deep water
Where the sea weed seed
Betrays an urgent need
To roam where it is never dry
And to grow
Below the flotsam and the foam
And the forceful waves that rise and die
And never find a home.

CEMETERY

The quiet intimacy of the cemetery
The lack of time in old tombstones
The lack of space in graves
The whispering shadows of noisy bones
Reveal today the ghosts of tomorrow
That were yesterday entombed
Here where slayers hacked
These crypts are packed
Some engraved with flattery
Within these holed abodes
Find custom's delitescent place
Stacked regimented cavities
The great moral in death's mode
And I felt the troglodyte
In a crowd of graves
Where harried moles had burrowed
Ten thousand holes
Just to have the scent of tea.

CREATION

THE CREATION MYTH OF THE MALOZI
collected by Marthe Arnaud

Nyambe lived on earth with his wife Nasilele, long long ago. It was he who made the forests and the river, and the plain, it is he who made all the animals, the birds, the fishes and he made also Kamunu and his wife.

Kamunu distinguished himself quickly from the other animals. When Nyambe carved a piece of wood, he the man also carved his own. When Nyambe carved a wooden cup, the man also carved his own. When Nyambe forged the iron, the man also forged his own. Nyambe was amazed and he began to fear man. Then man forged himself a lance. One day he killed the male child of the big red antelope. And he killed other animals as well; he ate them.

Nyambe scolded him, he said:

"You man, your way of acting is bad. Why do you kill them? These are your brothers. Do not eat them, you are my children together."

Then Nyambe chased the man, he sent him far away.

There Kamunu ate for one year. When he returned he arrived at the place where one drinks water. He was seen by Kangomba, the large red antelope. She went to speak to Sasisho, the messenger bird of Nyambe, she said:

"The one whom I saw down there, who holds a magic pot and a club, is that not the same Kamunu who killed us?"

Sasisho went to talk to Nyambe, he said.

"Kamunu is here, he has returned."

Nyambe said:

"I have heard. Let him sit down."

Once Kamunu came to Nyambe. It was Kangomba who had taken Kamunu to Sasisho, the messenger of Nyambe. Kamunu asked from God land to cultivate. He was given fields. Kamunu worked the land.

The buffaloes entered Kamunu's fields at night. Kamunu wounded a buffalo. He died. The night lifted. He went and he found him who was dead. He went to Nyamba:

"I have killed the buffalo."

Nyambe said:

"Let him eat it."

Kamunu's pot died. The pot in which he boiled his magic medicines. It died Kamunu went to Kangomba he said:

"Go and speak on my behalf to Nyambe. Tell him my pot has died."

Nyambe said:

"My own things also are like that."

Kamunu arrived in his village. The deer entered his field at night. Kamunu wounded the male among them. It was he who was wounded by Kamunu. The deer died. Kamunu carried the tail to Kangomba. He said: "I have killed the deer."

Kangomba went to Nyambe. Nyambe said: "Let him eat it, it is my welcome present."

Kamunu returned. Kamunu's dog died. Kamunu went to Kangomba and said: "My dog has died."

Nyambe said: "It is good; I have heard."

Kamunu returned from Nyambe. He said to his wife: "I saw the dog with Nyambe, and the pot."

The wife refused to believe. She said: "It is not like that."

The sun set. The elephants came to Kamunu's field. The wife woke the man. The man arose, took his lances and wounded an elephant. He wounded him. The elephant died. The night lifted. In the morning he went and found him who was dead.

Kamunu went to Kangomba he said: "Go and announce me to Nyambe. Say, I have killed the elephant."

Nyambe said: "Eat him. It is your welcome present. I have not given you any present yet since you have come back to me.

Kamunu returned. When he came to his wife he said: "Nyambe has said that we should eat our welcome present."

Kamunu's child died. The child died Kamunu went to Kantomba:

"Go speak to Nyambe for me; say that my child is dead."

They went to Nyambe together. There Kamunu found his child with Nyambe, he found it sitting there.

Nyambe said: "My own things also end like that."

Nyambe called Sasisho and Kangomba: "How shall we live? Kamunu can come here too easily." They went on to an island.

Kamunu assembled large cane and stood on it. He went to find Nyambe on the island. Kamunu carved a canoe, he went to give to Nyambe out of everything he collected, animal or fish. Nyambe was sad, he did accept them, but he refused to eat them, because they were his children.

Nyambe made a mountain, he took refuge thereon. But there too man followed him.

Nyambe wanted to flee again. With Sasisho and Kangomba they sent messengers all over the earth. But they found the children of man wherever they went.

Then they called the soothsayers, and they called also Simbukoki, the propthetic insect: "Show us the South, show us the North. They sent all the birds to look for Litooma, the city of Nyambe. But they did not find it. They also called Nalungwana the diviner of Nyambe. Nalungwana made the divination. He seized Liuyii, the spider and he said: "Your life, King, depends on him."

Nyambe sent out Sasisho and Liuyii, they went to look for a place where Nyambe could live. They returned to Nyambe, they said: "We have found the town."

Nalungwana refused; he said "They have not yet reached the place, they must traverse the river, and go to the other bank."

Sasisho and Liuyii crossed the river, they arrived at Litooma. They returned, they said: "We have found the town on the other bank of the river."

Nalungwana acquiesced.

Nyambe thought of saving the animals, so that they could not be reached by man. The animals refused. They said: "We shall only live here."

The big red antelope said: "I shall live through speed; man cannot run."

The gun said: "I too, shall live like that."

And many others also said: "We too shall live through speed."

The fish said: "I do not fear man; I live in the water."

The hippopotamus said: "Man? I shall kill him. I am stronger than he."

The elephant said: "So am I."

The buffalo and the lion: "And we."

The hyena said: "I shall lie in wait for him at night; I shall seize him in his sleep."

The wild goose said: "I shall live by my wings."

The other birds: "And we too."

And so on and so on.

Nyambe still tried to persuade them, because man surpassed them in cunning. He said:

"Let all kinds go and collect wood."

They collected a great quantity and made a large heap.

Nyambe said: "Let the kettle boil."

The fire was lit, there was a big furnace, very big, and even the soil burnt. Nyambe said: "Let us see the one who can lift the pot from the fire."

The gun tried, it was afraid. The great antelope and the deer too were afraid. Many others could not even remain standing in front of the furnace and they fled. Those who tried hard were the elephant and the rhinoceros, they had their skin burnt and they fled to the water. The animals were all defeated. They could not lift the pot from the fire.

"We are calling Kamunu."

Kamunu and his people went to carry water from the river. They carried it in wooden cups, in calabashes and in pots. They soaked the ground with water, they poured water in the fire and so they extinguished it and they took the pot. They set a man to Nyambe who said: "We have alreday taken the pot."

Nyambe then assembled all the men and all the animals and said:

"If there is a man who was born today, let him be brought here."

But man refused and said: "He is very tender, he is only made of water, he cannot be held by any other man, except by her who has born him."

Then Nyambe said: "If there is an animal that was born today, let it come here." The animal came quickly. Nyambe said: "Let the animals walk as soon as they are born. Let man sit for a year before he walks."

Some animals agreed to go with Nyambe. These are the animals whose kind is unknown to us.

Nyambe and Nasilele his wife left with Sasisho, they crossed the river, they went to the other bank, they were taken to Litooma the city of Nyambe by Liuyii the spider. Nyambe said: "Let Liuyii return." But Nalungwana said: "Let Liuyii's eyes be blinded, so that he can never find this way again. Otherwise he may bring Kamunu to Nyambe."

Then Nyambe rose up high, he alone.

When Nyambe had gone up, Kamunu assembled all men and said :

"Let us build a high tower, so that we can go to Nyambe."

They erected wooden posts on the ground, they fixed others on top of them and tied them with lashes of bark; they raised the tower like that and it became very high. But because of the weight, the undermost barklashes tore, the tower fell and those who were on top of it died. Now Kamunu abandoned his efforts to find Nyambe.

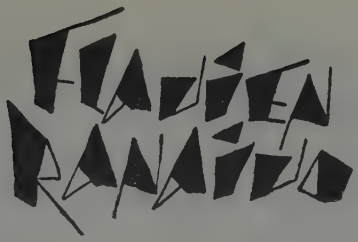
But every morning when the sun appears he says : "Here is our king, he has come." They bend their forehead to the ground, they clap their hands and they say :

Mangué, mangué, mangué Mulyeto !

(glory, glory, glory, to Mulyeto!)

When man wants to go hunting, or when he dreams in his sleep, or during illness, always he prays to Nyambe offering him water in a wooden cup, or some other thing; and on that day he will not do any work. Always he goes to worship him when the sun sets. He worships also Nasilele the wife of Nyambe, particularly when the moon is new.

When somebody dies and it is a man, they place him in the tomb and direct his face to the East, and if it is a woman they direct her face to the West so that they may know how to arrive near Nyambe or Nasilele. When a human being has arrived on the other side of the river, if it is one who has the ritual markings on the arms and the holes in the ears, he is being received by Nyambe, if it is a man, and by Nasilele, if it is a woman; he is shown the road that leads towards the King, there he will live well. But if there is one who has neither the ritual marks on his arms nor the holes in his ears, he will be given flies to eat, and if he does not accept them he will be sent on the large road, but which will become narrower and narrower until it ends altogether, it ends in the terrifying desert, where man will be killed by hunger and thirst.



2 POEMS TRANSLATED BY MIRIAM KOSHLAND

MY HOME IS SPACE

My home is space
the moon my lookout
the sky is my garden
and the stars my flowers.
I give you a sign
from the meadow of the night,
I wave the cloth of my lamba.
Then you will look for the road
which we shall walk together —
return to the shore
where we shall meet.
And when you have loved me
the stars will fall.

LOVE SONG.

Do not love me, my friend,
like your shadow —
shadows fade in the evening
and I will hold you
until the cock crows —
Do not love me like pepper,
it makes my belly too hot,
I cannot eat pepper
when I am hungry.
Do not love me like a pillow —
we would meet in sleep
and not see each other during the day.
Do love me like a dream —
for dreams are your life in the night
and my hope in the day.

TIBERIO

BY GERALD MOORE

Wilson Tiberio was born into a predominantly black community in southern Brazil, where Yoruba traditions were still strong and active. From the first he painted the life he saw around him, the life of peasants who had managed to transplant to a remote corner of the new continent a great deal of their ancestral spirit and culture. These early paintings are colourful and vigorous, stressing the gaiety and activity of the Brazilian streets and market places. Critics in the big cities or the coast accused Tiberio of racialism because he dealt only with black subjects. The fact was that he merely used his eyes, instead of painting "idealised" white skins, scarcely seen in his part of the country.

Nevertheless he was driven by an emotion rare among occidental negroes, a genuine nostalgia for Africa and a real need to live and work among its people. He longed to trace to their sources the customs, beliefs and profound spiritual traits of his Brazilian neighbours. In 1947 the chance came and he set off for French West Africa. For many months he travelled through the interior, living simply and working with furious energy as the flood of new subjects poured in upon him. Much of his work since then has been drawn from the great well of images and impressions which was filled in these journeys. A new sense of suffering and labour now fills his canvasses, but it is a suffering always transfigured and made beautiful by a dominating rhythm and grace. His designs also become simpler and keener, with a perfect balance of purity and strength. Works like *Porteuses d'eau au Niger*, *Maternité* and *Au retour d'Afrique Noire* still radiate these qualities, though all were painted more recently, during his years in Paris. In *Porteuses d'eau* the drooping shoulders, yokes and head-ties of the women are balanced by the ripe swelling forms of the gourds, as though all their tears were collected there. Again in *Maternité*, the elements of stylisation in the tubular neck and triangular nose are answered by the abundant curve of warm flesh and patterned cloth below.

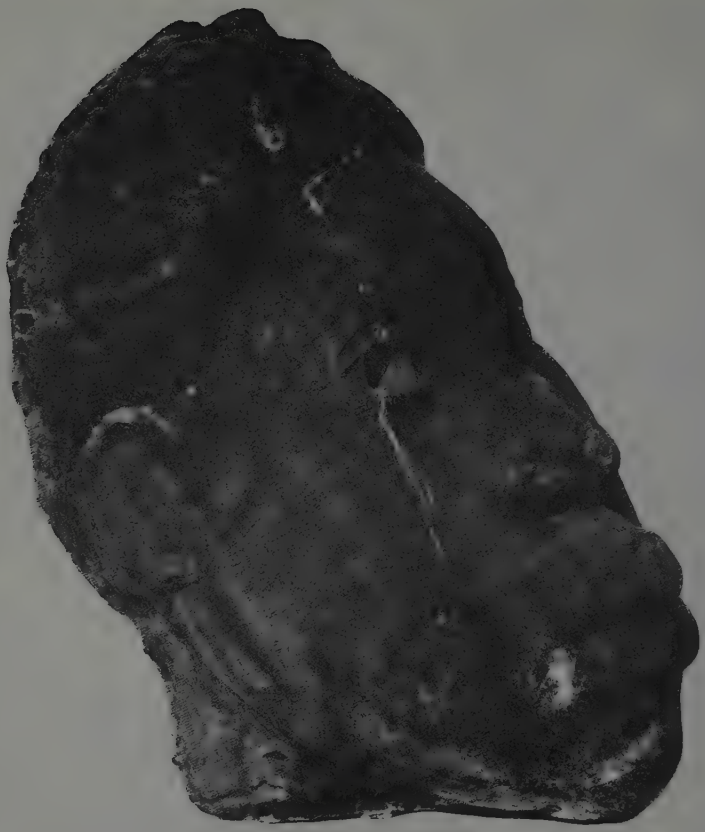
Despite his decade in Paris since 1950, Tiberio has remained always a painter of the human scene and has never produced an abstract canvas in his life. He describes abstraction as "aesthetic masturbation". Paintings like *Les forcats* may borrow something from cubism, but such borrowings are always subordinate to the humanism and compassion of his art, qualities which run through it from his first youthful essays in Brazil down to the deeply assured work of the 'fifties. The fine terracotta head of 1959 is typical of the sculptures which he has also begun to produce in recent years. There is an extra-ordinary eloquence in the long slope of the head.

WILSON TIBERIO : MATERNITE

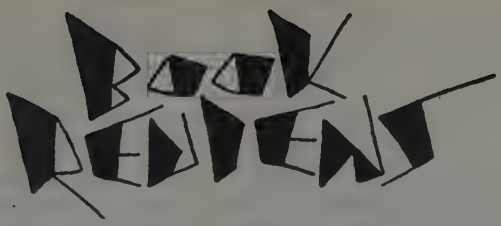
TIBERIO : PORTEUSES D'EAU

TIBERIO : LES FORLATS

TIBERIO : DANCERS



TIBERIO: TERRA COTTA HEAD



MUNTU by Janheinz Jahn
Eugen Diederichs, 1959. Faber & Faber, 1960.

This work by Janheinz Jahn, which first appeared with Eugen Diederichs in Germany in 1958 deals with the hypothesis of a neo-African culture the nature of which the author explains in 243 pages. Jahn, who never visited the African continent before writing this book, relies on the existing ethnographic literature and the works of contemporary African and Afro-American writers. From the texts he studied he collects examples from different parts of the continent and tries to present us traditional African culture as a unity. Thus for example the Bantu philosophies described by Alexis Kagame and Placide Tempels and the Dogon philosophy described by Griaule are being examined for the purpose of finding similarities, and these similarities are then treated as "African philosophy." Some characteristics of the music of Ghana and the music of African slaves are declared to be the "essence" of African music, and so on. From this "traditional African culture" is supposed to arise today the "neo African culture" — after a successful integration of European influences

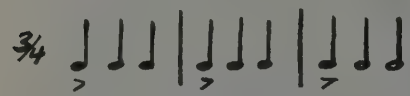
We must give credit to Jahn for never describing Africans as "primitive", a practice that still continues in popular and sometimes even in scientific literature on Africa. But we must reject the method with which he constructs his hypothesis of *one* traditional and of *one* Neo-African culture. Since the author has no personal experience of the African continent and his sources are entirely found in literature the result is a rather distorted picture of his subject. Much of the existing ethnographic material is of doubtful value and we are far from having a complete description of African cultures. It is easy to select from such an insufficient body of information such examples as suit the hypothesis and to interpret these examples as general characteristics of the African culture.

It seems particularly daring to try and derive "*the* African philosophy" from descriptions of only five different systems among only five different tribes, the more so because the authors are partly European.

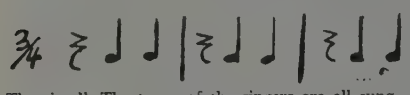
Considering the vast number of African peoples (according to official reports there are more than 500 languages) it seems rather thoughtless to accept five African philosophies as representing the whole continent, even if they *did* correspond in every detail.

If the author had travelled through Africa before writing his book, he might have convinced himself of the variety of cultures on this continent. As I am an ethnomusicologist and have spent a whole year travelling through a large part of Africa on foot in 1959/60 I should like to bring an example from my own field of study. I started my trip burdened with theories of "African rhythm" by Waterman, Dauer and other important writers. But soon I discovered that the concept "African rhythm" has no practical use at all. During my investigations in ten different African countries I found that not even the vague and generalising statement that African rhythm is complex and highly developed can be applied everywhere. In those areas where complex rhythms existed, the *type* of complexity was very different from tribe to tribe. The rhythms of the Baganda in East Africa and of the Yoruba in West Africa, for example, are highly complex and give an exciting, highly developed overall picture. But the way in which the Baganda combine their rhythmic formulas is completely different from that of the Yoruba But to my greatest surprise I even met tribes whose music

made me wonder whether I was in Africa at all. The *Nwaya* a dance of the Wapanga in South West Tanganyika is rhythmically as simple as an English Waltz. There are ten players in front of a row of large, beautifully built drums. But what they play (it seems unbelievable) is nothing but:



in a slow lazy tempo. This is accompanied by women on two smaller drums:



That is all. The tunes of the singers are all sung strictly *on the beat*. Yet I was assured that this was one of the oldest dances of the Wapangwa.

Where then is the famous "African" polyrhythm and polymetre, about which Jahn, inspired by the reading of Dauer, is so enthusiastic? Of course there are in Africa brilliant examples of polymetre and in most places of polyrhythm. But there are also areas in which little of the sort can be found. It is interesting to note too, that even in areas that use the most exciting rhythmic combinations, only a small part of the musical pieces is in complete polymetre. The word polymetre, which is so beloved to Jahn, does not, by the way, characterise something specifically African. Both modern and mediaeval European music employ polymetre — and they do not therefore sound specifically "African." The fact that the different voices of a composition are in different metres is a purely abstract principle, and does not in itself give African forms of music their character.

Another example from the plastic arts: the famous African sculptures originate largely from West and Central Africa. In some East African territories like Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika there is hardly any traditional art, with the exception of that which was influenced by the Arabs of the coast. Would it be fair to speak of "European" art if all pictures originated in Italy? Similarly there is no "African religion" (introduced as such in the second chapter, page 27, line 3) but only a variety of African religions.

Anybody who travels *slowly* through Africa will also notice that the members of different African cultures react in different ways to European influences. The Masai in Kenya have preferred to reject European civilisation almost entirely and simply to continue in their traditional life. Other tribes accept European civilisation unconditionally. In some territories, particularly in the British ruled territories of East Africa, entire nations get into psychological difficulties, as a result of forms of discrimination and of the enforcement of an all too rapid cultural change. In some cases the clash of African and European cultures becomes physical. The Kikiyu reacted after half a century of occupation with Mau Mau. The Baganda fight for their freedom with boycott measures.

In East Africa traditional crafts were almost completely destroyed by European trade and imports. Among the Yoruba of West Africa, however, they are still very much alive. Some tribes are ashamed of their traditions, others are proud of them. East Africa becomes predominantly Christian, in West Africa Islam is much stronger, but traditional African religions are also much stronger in West Africa and as a result there are many different cultural elements again.

In Katanga province in the Congo a modern form of African music has arisen of considerable artistic value; on the other hand the West African "Highlife" in most of its forms is little more than popular hit tunes. The poets enlisted by Janheinz Jahn who are supposed to represent the "neo-African" culture are largely from West and South Africa and from the West Indies. No important poet has so far been found in East Africa.

Janheinz Jahn says that "neo African culture" has "two components" (page 17 line 8) Even the "European component" (page 17 line 9) is built up from a variety of different components that vary from area to area in their composition. It

seems rather daring to assume with Jahn that from the encounter of a large variety of African cultures with *different* European cultures *one* "neo-African" culture can arise. We would rather imagine that new cultural developments would vary in different regions.

We do not only accuse the author of failing to write from personal observation, however, which tempts him to draw the wrong basic conclusion "that African culture presents itself as a unity". He is also guilty of having *misread* his sources. On page 41 line 14 Jahn writes:

"The drum music, its polymetric basis serving to establish a simultaneous sound of various rhythm patterns..."

(Original German version: "Die Trommelmusik deren Polymetrische Grundlage dazu dient, verschiedene Schlagformeln zugleich erklingen zu lassen . . ."

This is nonsense. It seems that the author understands neither the meaning of "polymetre" nor of "rhythm pattern". To say that a polymetric basis *serves* to produce various rhythm patterns is like saying that a waltz serves to produce a waltz-rhythm and waltz tunes.

It should be of course: Different rhythm patterns *form* a polymetre in their combination if each of them is in a particular individual metre.

An equally impossible formulation of Jahn's is:

"The African percussion rhythm is *either* polymetric or polyrhythmic." (page 169 line 19)

The author's logic becomes extremely dubious, when he associates ideas merely because of the *similar sound* of words. Page 41 line 27 he says: "The importance of this typically African polymetric basis of this music becomes clear through a comparison with those forms of possession which appear in the North American negro churches. Since — as Dauer proves — the polymetric basis has been lost in these, the community of worshippers is no longer being mounted by many Loas — but only by one — by Christ.'

How will Jahn prove to us that polymetre in music corresponds with polytheism in religion (in *the* African religion) and that monometre corresponds with the monotheism of Christianity? Even apart from the fact that in Africa and in America a large part of the traditional religious music is not polymetric at all, as one can easily find out by listening to tapes or records.

In spite of these faults, "Muntu" will have an educative and more or less positive effect on the wider circle of readers. We see the positive and educative element of the book in its basic moral attitude towards the African and the cultures of his continent. These readers who are still prejudiced are given a chance here to get rid of their prejudices. We do admit that the author loves the African and the creations of his spirit and this can be felt throughout the book. Many misconcepts about Africa are being removed For the non expert it is probably quite unimportant whether he sees one or many African cultures and whether he understands what is meant by polymetre or not.

It is important that this book can help to improve our relationship with Africans and in addition to that the well read author gives us a full bibliography and acquaints us with many African and Afro-American authors of whom the average reader hardly has any knowledge.

Gerhard Kubik

THE DRUMMER BOY by Cyprian Ekwensi,
Cambridge University Press, 1960.
THE PASSPORT OF MALLAM ILIA
by Cyprian Ekwensi,
Cambridge University Press, 1960.

With these two little books the author and Cambridge University do some very important pioneering work. The need has long been felt for a new type of youth literature to be written especially for the youngsters of West Africa. Most English youth books are not very meaningful to West African boys and girls because of the foreign background, and those English books that deal with the African scene are mostly found completely objectionable by Africans.

Cyprian Ekwensi who is widely known for his novel "People of the City" has here treated two Nigerian scenes. The first book is about a blind drummer boy in Lagos, the other about an exciting adventure in the far North of Nigeria. To this reader "The Passport of Mallam Ilia" seems more successful of the two. It is a genuine adventure story, a real thriller, with plenty of fighting, wrestling, escapes, disguises and a cavalry charge thrown in free of charge This is a real boys book. Few young boys will worry about the improbabilities in the plot. They will be carried away by the excitement of the story and the rich technicolour pageantry of the scenes. (One thinks of a film script immediately.)

The blind drummer boy is a bit too full of good feelings and good intentions. The boy himself is a successful figure — happy with his drum and constantly trying to escape his benefactors. In the end, alas, the 'do gooders' get the better of him and the author destroys the charming image of his own creation. The blind drummer boy becomes "respectable" by being put into a school where he can learn to read and write. There is no harm of course, in this bit of sentimentality, but my own guess is that "Mallam Ilia" will prove more successful with the younger generation.

Omidiji Aragbabalu

KOSSOH TOWN BOY by Robert Wellesley Cole, Cambridge University Press, 1960. Price: 12s. 6d.

This is the autobiography of an African surgeon from Freetown. It is of special interest because Mr. Cole comes from a family of Krios and his childhood, which he describes in this book, is therefore remarkably different from Camara Laye's childhood described in the famous book "The Dark Child".

Robert Wellesley Cole has nothing to tell of the mysteries of traditional life of which "The Dark Child" is so full. The Krios, having merged from many different African peoples had lost all their traditional customs. The author was born in a Christian family whose ideals and values are unbelievably English, and Victorian English at that.

The book is told in a simple but charming language and the author emerges as a most likeable person who takes the little things of everyday life most seriously. His narrative is in fact a record of simple everyday events in his family and his passing of the school certificate is as near as he ever gets to some sort of emotional climax.

Compared with "The Dark Child" the book is extremely prosaic. It has neither the poetry nor the imaginative vision of the French book Nor does Wellesley Cole convey the wonderful dignity of African life in the way Camara Laye did. In "The Dark Child" even the smallest events take on a symbolic significance and each episode helps to build up the book into a great African vision of life. In "Kossoh Town Boy" we are left, ultimately, with nothing but a picture of Victorian respectability.

Robert Wellesley's extremely simple — almost naive — interpretation of life does not seem to be typical of the highly sophisticated and cultured urbanity that one usually associates with intellectual Krios.

Sangodare Akanji

MIGUEL STREET — by V. S. Naipaul. Andre Deutsch 15s.

Miguel Street disappoints the high expectations aroused by V. S. Naipaul's two comic novels. It is a collection of "character sketches" from his boyhood in Port of Spain and the bizarre inhabitants of Miguel Street are paraded before us in a light throw-away prose that forbids us to take any of them too seriously or for too long. There are the prolific Laura, bearer of eight children by seven men, the mechanical genius Uncle Bakcu, the sinister Toni, the philosophic Hat who acts as a kind of Chorus to the show until he goes off to prison for savaging his mistress. But somehow Mr. Naipaul's laconic humour becomes tedious without a comic plot-line on which to string it. It begins to seem tricksy and affected after the first few stories, and the hun-

dredth witticism beginning, "Hat said," is exasperating. Also it is hard to accept a narrator who occasionally introduces himself as speaking the dialect of Miguel Street, when it is pretty obvious that the author must always have been a wide-eared scholar stalking cat-like through the rotten alleyways of his native city. The impersonal narrative of *The Suffrage of Elvira* was a far better medium for his sense of comedy, which needs in any case a novel's room to display itself.

One or two stories, however, give us glimpses of the mastery which Mr. Naipaul can display at his best: the sad and funny figure of Man-Man, the painful make-believe of the poet B. Wordsworth, or the jackdaw scavenger Errol riding proudly through the early morning on his gleaming blue cart.

Gerald Moore

AN AFRICAN TREASURY by Langston Hughes. Crown Publishers, Inc. New York. $3.50.

Recently I reviewed an anthology of African writing, *Darkness and Light*, in these pages. My chief complaint against it was that the editor, Mrs. Peggy Rutherfoord, had cluttered the work with antiques: mythology and folk tales; that there was very little *new* writing, and that, where there was, she had not brought to her selections a critical mind, — judging from their poor quality.

I cannot say the same of Langston Hughes's anthology. It is a robust little packet, the best collection of contemporary African writing. And yet Mr. Hughes worked by remote control and did not have Mrs. Rutherfoord's rare opportunity of touring Africa to look for material.

Mr. Hughes went for articles, miscellaneous writing, essays, short stories and poetry. Apart from Nigeria's Gabriel Okara and Wole Soyinka; Senegal's Birago Diop; Sierra Leone's Abioseh Nicol, and Malagasy's Jean Joseph Rabearivelo, each of whom is represented by one poem, the contributors in the verse section are a weak lot. Soyinka is the most sophisticated of these; he is the only writer in British-settled West Africa who can laugh in words; he is not a slave to the "African experience" whatever negritude may say about such a thing. Nor does Rabearivelo pretend, in his *Flute Players*, to an exclusively Malagasy experience: "Your flute/you carved from the shinbone of a strong bull/and polished it on barren hills beaten by sun.

Babs Fafunwa (Nigeria) has some interesting things to tell about his experiences in the United States, peculiar to most Africans. J. Koyinde Vaughan's (Nigeria) essay, *Africa and the Cinema*, should purge the Nigerian's unquestioning, innocent and unsophisticated acceptance of the white man's glorified image of himself and stupid image of the African on the cinema screen. If it has cost Paul Robeson years of regret to have appeared in compromising film roles, it must cost years of education for Nigerians to appreciate his position.

> The funeral ceremony being declared open, the women like minstrels tell the story of the whale in parables; its connection with the state is recounted and the dead one praised. The chief and his advisers are head mourners and make themselves responsible for the fair distribution of drinks, providing food for those who have come from afar and recording donations received.

This is from J. Benibengor Blay's (Ghana) *Funeral of a Whale*, which makes interesting reading. J. H. Kwabena Nketia (Ghana) takes us to the enchanting and idyllic land of Akan poetry. Efua Theodora Sutherland (alias Efua Morgue) of Ghana reminds us in the exciting style of her prose story, *New Life at Kyerefaso*, that she is essentially a poet. Thus:

> Shall we say
> Shall we put it this way
> Shall we say that the maid of Kyerefaso, Foruwa, daughter of the Queen Mother, was as a young deer, graceful in limb?.... And she was light of foot, light in all her moving.

Abioseh Nicol's story also reminds us that he is the best writer of English prose in West Africa.

It is a far cry from the prose style of West Africans, which has a decidedly British influence, to that of South Africans, which shows cultural cross-impacts that only a multi-racial society can provide. South African writing is full of physical and mental violence, semantic violence, rhythms that reflect restlessness, impatience.

Can Themba will say in his impressionistic manner:

> Fatty of the Thirty-nine Steps. Now, that was a great shebeen! It was in Good Street. You walked up a flight of steps, the structure looked dingy as if it would crash down with you any moment. You opened a door and walked into a dazzle of bright electric light, contemporary furniture and massive Fatty. Gay, friendly, coquettish, always ready to sell you a drink. But now that house is flattened. I'm told that in Meadowin Meadowlands she has lost the zest for the game. She has even tried to look for work in town. Ghastly.

After coming out of the country, Bloke Modisane recalls angrily:

> I locked myself up in my room to have that illegal drink, bowed to the Immorality Act of 1957, which lays down that sexual acts between black and whites are illegal, immoral and un-Christian. I permitted my labour to be exploited because I had to live. I accepted the discrimination against my skin as a physical reality I had to live with; I stood by while a sidewalk bully pushed his finger into my nostril, spitting insults at me. Stood there suffocating with anger, afraid that any moment I was going to shout "Go to hell!" Restraining my fingers from closing round his throat and squeezing.

Todd Matshikiza, in his typically temperamental style, will say:

> Their new priest from overseas was young an' bold an' brave about the sinfulness of the souls in his parish. An' every Sunday he would grasp the pulpit in both hands an' say, You coloureds drink! You coloureds haven't a chance in heaven. The coloured congregation became cross. They went up to the priest an' said, "Now look, stop calling us you coloureds, because we ain't goin' about calling you, you European. Stop that finger-pointing business, an' stop throwing bricks made of you coloureds or we'll mangle you, we'll hangle you, we'll make your life a bangle."

In Richard Rive's story, *The Bench*, a Coloured man, Karlie, sits on a bench which is for Europeans only; just so that he should conquer his fear and vindicate his dignity.

> Two conflicting ideas now throbbed through him. The one said, "I have no right to sit on this bench." The other was the voice of a new religion and said, "Why have I no right to sit on this bench?" The one voice spoke of the past, of the servile position he had occupied on the farm, of his father, and his father's father who were born black, lived like blacks, and died like mules.....

In any anthology of African writing, one is struck by either the absence or paucity of material from Central and East Africa. Although oppression is not lacking here and should normally be a spur to literary activity, British indirect rule has left behind it a vast area of unsophisticated humanity. In South Africa, on the other hand, where oppression is often a paralysing spur, the high degree of literacy (60 per cent.) often helps non-whites to live above their distress.

This collection is far from exhaustive. Langston Hughes says he was prompted to set about it after reading hundreds of entries for the *Drum* short story contest which the South African edition used to run for several years, and which attracted contributions from all parts of Africa. One must hope that another endeavour is not far off.

Ezekiel Mphahlele

MISSION TO KALA by Mongo Beti, translated by Peter Green and published by Frederick Muller, 1958. Originally published in French as *Mission Terminee* by Editions Correa, Paris, 1957.

It is always difficult to forgive an author for surprising us completely. Mongo Beti has committed this fault with his second novel *Mission to Kala* (Mission Terminée), an extravagant comedy of innocence and experience. His new hero enters wholeheartedly the world of ordinary lustful living which surrounded like a hostile wilderness the missionary labours of the Reverend Pere Superieur Drumont and his "boy" in *The Poor Christ of Bomba*. Even the title of the new book seems to echo ironically the preoccupations of the first. The differences of tone, pace and structure are even more remarkable than those of theme. *The Poor Christ of Bomba*, despite its fine oblique satirical humour, was slow-moving, repetitious and prolix. But it esta-

blished itself at once in the reader's mind as a deeply serious and radical work, an utter and final rejection of white missionary activity in colonised Africa. Speed and Gusto are the key-notes of *Mission to Kala*, while the serious core of the book is more elusive and slower to resolve itself.

Jean-Marie Medza has just failed his Baccalaureat examination and returns to his village for a rest, only to find himself jacked off on a a bicycle to the "bush" village of Kala to retrieve the erring wife of his lazy cousin Niam. At Kala he is treated as a scholar and a hero, especially by his beefy young cousin Zambo. His complete sexual and alccholic innocence put him at quite a disadvantage in a community devoted to palm-wine and love-making, but he does his best to carry off the role of "city slicker" which has been assigned to him by the "simple" villagers. When the most beautiful and unattainable girl in the place offers herself, embarrassment renders him quite impotent and he has to plead indifference in explanation later to his wondering friends. Finally Zembo manages to introduce him to the equally innocent young daughter of the chief. This time, being allowed to make the running, he achieves a triumphant seduction, only to find himself subjected to the African equivalent of a shot-gun wedding by the girl's canny old father.

When the awakened Medza returns to his native village, he has a fortnight to think things out before the processional arrival of his new bride and Niam's fly-blown one, who has been successfully recalled to her duties after a strenuous bout of adultery. He realises that he is too young to get bogged down in marriage, even to the delightful Edima, and that he canont tolerate his mean tyrannical father a moment longer. On the arrival of the Kala delegation, Medza creates a scene of splendid comedy by returning drunk in the midst of the celebrations, kissing Edima, defying his father dodging a savage beating, and finally walking out with Zambo towards a life whose promise he has just begun to guess.

Only in these last pages does Beti deepen his tone, showing that all this is something more than a ribald reminiscence, but is a moment of youth which he is still exploring, to which he must return again and again;

> a journey which enabled me to discover many truths. Not least...the discovery — made by contact with the country folk of Kala, those quintessential caricatures of the 'colonised' African — that the tragedy which our nation is suffering today is that of a man left to his own devices in a world which does not belong to him, which he has not made and does not understand.

Gerald Moore.

ODU

A JOURNAL OF YORUBA, EDO AND RELATED STUDIES

Edited by S. O. BIOBAKU, A. Y. EKE, H. U. BEIER

From the contents of no. 8:

Discoveries in Ilesha — William Fagg and Frank Willett

Yoruba Wall Paintings — Ulli Beier

Stories from Benin — R. E. Bradbury

Yoruba writing — J. F. Ade Ajayi

Osifakorede of Ijebu — P. C. Lloyd

Ijala — E. O. Yemitan

Yoruba Poems — Adeboye Babalola and A. O. Odunsi

Published by: General Publications Section
Ministry of Education,
Western Region ,Ibadan. Nigeria.

NIGERIA MAGAZINE

THE GODS AS GUESTS

by Robin Horton
7/6+1/- postage overseas

SACRED WOODCARVINGS

by Ulli Beier
6/-+1/- postage abroad

NIGERIA 1960

SPECIAL INDEPENDENCE ISSUE
2/-+2/- postage overseas

What the critics say!

This very well-illustrated booklet is intended for the layman. Mr Horton is to be congratulated on having written a vivid and sociologically valuable account of Kalabari religion for an audience of which a high proportion is Nigerian.

Africa. January 1961.

He has provided us, with a scholarly and readable introduction to Kalabari life and religion.

Ibadan. Number 10

Mr. Beier and the editor of the Nigeria Magazine are to be congratulated on this venture; that it has been reprinted three times shows that they have succeeded in finding many readers for this modestly priced booklet.

Africa. January 1961

Nigeria Magazine has produced a splendid independence issue. It is lavishly illustrated and has a most impressive list of contributors.

Ibadan. Number 10

A number of Journals have produced special issues. to commemorate Nigeria's Independence, but this is an outstanding example... The entire issue was printed in Lagos and marks an important step forward in Nigerian publishing apart from its interest as a survey of the newly independent nation.

Royal Commonwealth Society Journal.

Obtainable from the Exhibition Centre, Marina, Lagos. Nigeria

---

ART IN NIGERIA 1960

by ULLI BEIER

Most writers on Africa follow the simple formula that old carvings are good and new ones bad; modern African artists, they say, are merely copying Europe instead of "going back to their own traditions".

This provocative and richly illustrated booklet shows that the situation is a great deal more complicated than that. Mr. Ulli Beier believes that in Africa new art forms have been evolved independently of European teaching and influence; that the intellectual African artist cannot simply be asked to "go back" to his traditions.

Mr. Beier does not attempt to give a comprehensive survey of art in Nigeria today; the choice of examples is largely dominated by his own personal experience. With his wife, the artist Susanne Wenger, Mr. Beier has lived for ten years in a small Nigerian town and this forthright account of Nigeria's rich artistic activity is the product of his life amongst Nigerians.

Clothbound, 18s. 6d. *net* *paperbound,* 10s. 6d. *net*

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
WEST AFRICAN OFFICE
P. O. BOX 33, IBADAN

ROHO

JOURNAL OF THE VISUAL ARTS IN EAST AFRICA

FROM THE CONTENTS OF THE FIRST ISSUE:

The politics of artists — editorial
Memories — by Elmo Njau
Killimanjaro god dust — by Sam Ntiro
Why Art? — by Professor Cecil Todd
Verse Riddles — by Gregory Maloba
African pottery — by Bruce Kent
Science and Art — by Pat Henderson
A poem of Kikuyu — by Rebecca Njau
Prehistoric Island — by M. Posnansky
Lithographs — by Su Tung Wen
Mountains of the Moon — by J. Kingdom
On Kufic — by Ai Darwish
Somali Embroidery — by M. Whittaker
Top Life — by Louis Mwanki
Architecture — by A. G. Smith, A.R.I.B.A.

Obtainable from: "ROHO", P. O. Box 262,
Kampala, Uganda.

Price 3/-.

PARTISAN REVIEW

AMERICA'S LEADING LITERARY REVIEW
Now bi-monthly

Special double issue
DISSONANT VOICES IN SOVIET LITERATURE

underground and off-beat Russian writing in a selection never before available in English. Edited by Patricia Blake and Max Hayward.
$1.25 at all newsstands and book stores.

.....

Partisan Review, 22 East 17th St., N.Y.C. 3

Please enter my subscription for

☐ 1 year @ $5.50
☐ 2 years @ $9.00 (a saving of $2.00)

add 75% per year for foreign subscriptions

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

☐ Check enclosed Please bill me ☐

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

MARTHE ARNAUD
this Malozi myth first appeared in Presence Africaine No. 2 in an article "Mythologie et Folklore sur le Haut-Zambeze".

BASIL McFARLANE
born 1922 in Kingston, Jamaica. Works in the Central Film Organisation of Jamaica. Published a volume of poems "Jacob and the Angel", British Guiana 1952.

ELLIS AYITEY KOMEY
Ghanaian poet living in London. Much of his work (including short stories) appeared in the West African Review.

GERHARD KUBIK
student of Music in Vienna. Recently visited Africa on a research trip. In preparation: a book on Uganda xylophones and another on Yoruba children's songs.

MASON JORDAN MASON
published "Notebook 23", 1949; "Dream in Heliotrope", 1952; "Mussolini has met his end in the mad house" 1952; "The Blue Green Whale" 1952 all Motive Press; Ranches of Taos, New Mexico. See other poems and biography in BO 7.

GERALD MOORE
director of Extra-Mural Studies, Makerere College, Uganda. See articles in Black Orpheus No. 1, No. 4 and No. 7.

J. S. MOSLEY
born in Philadelphia 1920. Education in USA, France and Sweden. Has been working as an engineer in Ghana since 1952.

EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE
co-editor of "Black Orpheus". Published "Down Second Avenue", Faber and "The Living and Dead" Special Publication of "Black Orpheus".

NKEM NWANKWO
second year student at University College, Ibadan. This story won first prize at a short story competition organised by the LAGOS BRANCH of the NIGERIAN ARTS COUNCIL in 1960.

MICHAEL OKAFOR
Graduate in Agriculture from University College, Ibadan.

FLAVIEN RANAIVO
born 1914 in Arivonimano, Madagascar. Published a volume of poems "L'Ombre et le Vent", 1947 Tanarive.

EDRIS SAINT AMAND
born 1918 in Gonaives, Haiti. Was Deputy Director of the National Library in Port au Prince. Lives in Paris since 1951. Published a novel "Bon Dieu Rit", Domat, Paris 1952. This extract is published by permission of *Büchergilde Gutenberg* Zürich, ("Der Flammenbaum" 1955.).

IBRAHIM TAHIR
Hausa writer and critic now working for Hausa Programmes of the BBC in London. The extract is taken from an incomplete novel.

WOLFGANG VOGEL
secretary to the Institute of "Neo Afrikanische Forschung" in Offenbach.

THE ARTISTS

THE VIGNETTES
are by a patient of Lantoro Hospital, Abeokuta. (The work of two other patients can be seen in B.O. 10.

THE COVER
designed by Susanne Wenger after an applicué cloth from Dahomey.